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My first contact with the Creature from the Black Lagoon was in the pages of Famous Monsters of Filmland magazine—issue #44 to be exact. I was just a boy, no more than six years old, when I came across an article on The Creature Walks Among Us, titled "Attack of Mr. Black." From that time on, I was fascinated by the Gill-man. About a year later, while visiting my aunt, I learned that The Creature from the Black Lagoon was going to air on New York's WWOV Channel 9 at 1 a.m. I begged my aunt to wake me up so that I could finally see Blackie in action. Unfortunately, all I can remember were the opening credits, and then I fell back to sleep. I still recall how disappointed I was in myself the next day, thinking I will never get to see the Creature in anything but a photo. Fortunately, my cousin Sandy had a Super-8 Castle Film of The Creature Walks Among Us, so I did manage to see Universal's most beloved monster, even though the film was mostly a glorified highlight reel.

Creature fans will rejoice when they learn of a wonderful new documentary titled Creature Feature: 50 Years of the Gill-Man. The film was conceived by writer/producer Sam Borowski, who informs readers all about Universal's last great original monster. Sam contributes a loving tribute to Ben Chapman as well. The Creature love-fest continues with an interview with the underwater Creature, Ricou Browning, who was interviewed by Scream's classic horror columnist John Skerchock. We are featuring two Creature covers for this issue. Artists Bill Chancellor's fantastic "Blackie Attacks," and Michael Roddy's eerie "Creature Suicide" are sure to be fan pleasers. If your local retailer has only one cover for sale, you can purchase the alternate cover at www.screemag.com.

Our new writers include Tom Weaver, whose work has appeared in every respectable horror genre magazine. We are proud to have him onboard. Stephen Hart's writing is new to Scream, but his work is seen throughout the issue. Stephen wrote two articles for our seventeenth edition, and we think you'll enjoy his writing style. Todd Garbarini is with us for the first time as well. He gives us the lowdown on Keith Crocker's Blitzkrieg. Escape from Stovog 69.

As always, I'd like to take this space to thank several Scream veterans who have been with us for several issues. Their hard work and dedication to the magazine makes my job as editor worthwhile: Greg Goodsell, Shane M. Dallmann, David Wilt, Kevin Sean Michaels, Shade Rupe, Michael Thomason, Aaron Graham, Mike Sullivan and Joe Wawrzyniak. Their tireless work and dedication to this publication is greatly appreciated by yours truly.

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If you're a writer who'd like to contribute to future issues of Scream, drop us a line at ScreamMagazine@aol.com, 41 Meyer St., Wilkes Barre, PA 18702, or send an e-mail to SCREAMMAG@aol.com.

Enjoy the issue!

Darryl Mayeski

Darryl Mayeski
Editor

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available
on the web at
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THE REEL GILL-MAN IS LAID OUT TO SEA

REMEMBERING BEN CHAPMAN

By Sam Borowski

Ben Chapman, who portrayed the original topside Gill-Man in the *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*—the first installment in Universal's last great monster series—collapsed and was admitted to Tripler Medical Center in Honolulu on February 20. Barely one day later, at 12:15 a.m. Hawaiian time, Chapman, who often touted himself as "The Reel Gill-Man," passed from congestive heart failure. He was 79 years old at the time of his death.

Unfortunately a grand knowledge of the Golden Age of Hollywood died along with him on that sad day. And, it is truly a reason to mourn.

However, Chapman was given a sendoff, befitting that of a true icon of the Silver Screen. His body was cremated and a memorial service was held at St. Augustine By-the-Sea Church in Waikiki in Honolulu on March 29 at 9 a.m. Afterward, some of his ashes were scattered off Waikiki Beach from various Hawaiian outrigger canoes.

A short time later in April, a second remembrance was held in a very small private ceremony, attended by only four people, to scatter his remaining ashes at Universal Studio's back lot—in the actual lagoon where *Creature from the Black Lagoon* was filmed more than fifty years ago.

As a close personal friend of Chapman's, I only thought it was fitting that the second gathering took place at the very spot where Chapman had perhaps his proudest and happiest moments in the entertainment industry: where he became Universal's last great original monster.

Now, one might think if places could talk, oh the tales that lagoon could tell. But, one thing is for certain, it could tell many more stories of Hollywood's Golden Age, now that it becomes the final resting place for Ben Chapman.

You see, Ben was truly a wealth of knowledge where Old Hollywood was concerned. And he often regaled his many fans and friends, whom he considered family, with those tales. He shared so much with me—so many stories, so much passion for the very *Creature* he played, and ultimately so much love that I have mixed emotions about writing this piece.

On one hand, what better fitting tribute to his memory than to share some of his lesser known—and perhaps oft-told—stories with the many readers of this fine publication. Still, on the other, it makes me come to the realization that Uncle Benny, as many referred to him, is no longer with us.



Ben Chapman prepares for another day at the office . . .

One thing that truly saddens me—along with the loss of a good friend—is that I feel, in some way, we have lost a piece of Americana, a piece of our culture.

After all, how many people can say they got to have cocktails with Marilyn Monroe, perhaps one of Hollywood's two or three most legendary performers of all time, and have the Blonde Bombshell herself say she was a fan of theirs? Well, Benny could.

He often spoke of how he met Marilyn at a party at Peter Lawford's house, and searched for a way to tell her that he was the very actor who portrayed the Gill-Man in *Creature from the Black Lagoon*—the same film Monroe's unnamed character goes to see with Tom Ewell in *The Seven Year Itch*.

He did find a way and Monroe's response—at least for Ben—couldn't have been better: "You did?" she gasped. And he answered, "Yes, I did." He then asked her if she had ever seen the film, and once again, her response was on the mark. "Yes, and I just love that film," she smiled.

The smile must still have been on Benny's face because as he said, after that, he just "floated around the room for a while."

But again, there was a multitude of those special moments for Benny.

Such as the time they were filming *Creature* in the very same lagoon that now serves as one of Benny's final resting places. This was back in 1953, when principal photography was going on, and Rock Hudson decided to bring a few elderly guests to the set and watch Benny trolling around the "Black Lagoon," with his head barely above water. As he often said, it was terribly hot in the rubber suit, so he liked to stay cool under the water.

However on this particular day, Benny thought he would raise the heat levels a bit with a prank that was reminiscent of his wonderful spirit and his joy for life and for whatever he was doing at the moment. He simply waded into the shallow part of the lagoon, where the older guests of Hudson were standing, likely watching in awe. As he got to the shallow portion of the water, unnoticed, his head barely sticking out, he leaped out of the water screaming bloody murder and sending the older guests into a panic.

After that day, he was told, "Not to scare anymore guests or visitors on the set." But, I can still see the smile on Benny's face, or hear his laughter as he recounted the tale.

But, as he often pointed out to me, it was a different time back then. After all, the main gate at Universal was next to an open field filled with rabbits, and there was a little bar across the street, The Keys, where all the actors and contract players spent time.

He often lamented that it was a different business and a different world now. And, he often spoke of those differences.

"When we made movies there was no gore," he said. "We left everything to your imagination. You go into movies today and body parts are flying all over the place."

Those were Benny's words, *not mine*, but still it must have been hard for today's films to live up to the films from the Golden Age. And Benny was there for all of it.

After all, how many of us can say we rented our downstairs apartment to John Wayne, so he could use it for his production company's headquarters? That's right, Benny, in his heyday, lived on a beachfront property in Malibu, that had a large downstairs. The rent for the house was \$800 a month, a large sum for the fifties.

However, not so large for Benny, when you consider that he charged Wayne the exact same amount just for the downstairs alone. Not only did it help Ben make his rent, but it also gave him a conversation piece for a lifetime.

Still, Benny was filled with those. Everything from his experience playing the Creature to who he worked with, played with, and met during his time in Hollywood. And the respect he showed the Gill-Man himself, he often spoke of him as if he was his alter-ego, a living, breathing entity, that he was lucky enough to know for a while.

And, in fact, it was Benny himself who inspired me to write and produce the feature-length documentary, *Creature Feature: 50 Years of the Gill-Man*, which tells the story of the era behind the creation and marketing of the original film, *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, and the hysteria that followed for the character. I still remember Benny encouraging me to, "make that film," as soon as he heard the idea leave my lips.

Yes, to many, he was known as Uncle Benny, but to me, he was more of a surrogate father. And he always looked after me in the business like a son. Now that he is gone, it forces me to look at how different life must have been for him back then, during the Golden Age of Hollywood, when Ben Chapman cut his teeth and grew up, not only playing the Creature, but appearing in small roles in movies, such as *Jungle Moon Men* and *Ma and Pa Kettle in Waikiki* or as a dancer in MGM's *Pagan Love Song*, his first movie role back in 1950.

But, as he often pointed out, that time is gone now. And so is he, and that is just the way of life, I guess. But I prefer to think of how Ben lived, playing the Creature back in 1953, not yet realizing his character would go to be an icon of pop culture, and not just some B-movie monster as many thought at the time. I prefer to think of him mingling with Marilyn Monroe and schmoozing with John Wayne and Peter Lawford.



But, the fact remains, those times are ancient history. As my film points out, there is no more open field at Universal and The Keys is long gone.

So, too, is Ben Chapman, though a piece of him will live on forever, not only on celluloid in his most famous role, but in the hearts and minds of every life he touched. Everyone from his wife and partner Merrill, to his three children, to the many fans and friends he enjoyed talking with.

And it is my hope that they can be a beacon of knowledge on Hollywood's Golden Age as Ben Chapman was. Still, there is nothing like first-hand accounts, but unfortunately, like the man himself, those are gone forever now.

And it is truly a reason to mourn

Sam Borowski is a filmmaker and a freelance writer living in New York City. He was the writer-producer of *CREATURE FEATURE: 50 YEARS OF THE GILL-MAN*, a feature-length documentary that will be available soon. He also produced the feature film, *REX*, which is currently making the rounds in film festivals around the country, and is also a lifelong fan of the Creature from the Black Lagoon. He often referred to himself as Ben Chapman's adopted son.



THE MAKING OF CREATURE FEATURE: 50 YEARS OF THE GILL-MAN

BY SAM BOROWSKI

50th
ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL

CREATURE FEATURE
50 YEARS
OF THE

GILL-MAN



I can still remember the moment the project came to fruition. And it all began with four friends banding together.

Yes, that is how the feature-length documentary, *Creature Feature: 50 Years of the Gill-Man* came to be. But, wait . . . I'm getting ahead of myself.

The year was 2001—a year that changed the face of this world forever. It changed my life in many ways, too. I lost a friend during the terrible tragedy of 9/11. But that tragic day, also prevented one of my feature films from getting funded.

I was lost and looking for a project when a good friend of mine—Ben Chapman, the first man to ever portray the Creature from the Black Lagoon—gave me some words of wisdom I will never forget. I had mentioned to Ben that I was considering documenting the Creature's long and storied history for the 50th anniversary. Moreover, I felt that the anniversary HAD to be a piece of the story. And it would remain an evergreen yardstick, no pun intended. At that point, the anniversary was several years down the road. He simply looked me in the eyes and said, "Go, DO it . . . JUST DO IT!"



This was much more powerful than a Nike ad. From that moment on, he was on my back almost goading me into doing it, although that wasn't necessary. As a lifelong Creature—and Universal Monster fan—this was somewhat of a dream project for me.

But still, it hadn't all quite come together yet. That's when a bit of fate put this project into motion. It was the first anniversary of 9/11, and I was up at the crack of dawn to watch a band of bagpipers go by (they were traveling throughout all of New York's five boroughs on this early morning in honor of those who had lost their lives a year earlier). It was there that I first met Matthew Crick, who would go on to be my partner in the project, and more than that—he became one of my best friends. Matt was a professional documentarian and a film professor. Thus, *Creature Feature: 50 Years of the Gill-Man*, was born.

I immediately felt that with myself, Benny and Matt, we had the makings of a great team. But there was one piece missing. That's when I brought on board our associate producer and jack of all trades, Eric Rosenberg, my partner in the production company, Cinematic Heroes. Eric brought with him a level of enthusiasm that helped us through some of the times that were much darker than anything Colin Clive faced in *Frankenstein*.



And so we began like a band of brothers, and I tell you I needed the help of every one of them.

That's because I had an immense task in front of me. I was chasing a legend, tracking down the Creature from the Black Lagoon. My

search took me from the hills of Hollywood to the swamps of Wakulla Springs in Florida, where the outdoor and underwater scenes of *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (not to mention *Revenge of the Creature*) were shot; past alligators, and on a boat ride with Captain Clarence that took Ben, Julie, Matt, Eric and I down that same river where *Creature* was shot; and, all the way to the back lot at Universal for the 'other' lagoon, where the actors filmed and doubled Wakulla Springs. It took me to the homes of several of the premiere *Creature from the Black Lagoon* collectors in the world. Actor Daniel Roebuck in Burbank made a passionate plea to fellow monster kids: "Don't buy monster toys. Forget it. Don't do it. Go buy baseball cards or Beanie Babies or something, and leave the monster toys to me . . . Me . . . me. Thank you. Thank you," he said feigning his hand as if he was Bela Lugosi in *Dracula*.



It also took me to the home of Johnny Gilbert, somewhere in Arizona (location secret) where Matt not only played some pinball on the Creature machine, but got a bit of childhood reminiscing from Gilbert himself. "Before I go to bed at night, when I'm out here in my monster room . . . when I hit the lights, and I look at all of the monster kits glowing . . . it's really weird. It makes you feel like you are six, seven years old again."

Just hearing that bit of nostalgia from Gilbert—which CAN be heard in the film—takes me back, as well. So many memories, really. I mean most monster kids, have their share of nostalgic moments. How about *Sketchy Things* artist Frank Dietz, a former Disney animator and a working screenwriter, he talked about how he used to look in the mirror as a child and try to turn into the Wolf Man like Lon Chaney Jr. He then said, "but, the Creature had a much greater impact on me—there's just something about the nature of that beast."

Dietz told a very special story about how he discovered the Creature in the 10-minute Castle Films shorts—essentially the highlights of the movie. But, he had never seen the film at that point. Again, he was a young child at this time. Then he saw one weekend that it was going to be on at 3:25 in the a.m. and alerted his mom. He described how cool a mom could be as she had set her alarm, woke him up, plopped him in front of the television set and went back to bed.

(above) Johnny Gilbert's incredible Creature collection.
(below) Castle Films Super-8 for *Revenge of the Creature*.



But the stories didn't end there. Even Academy Award winner Benicio Del Toro shared a few tales with us. Everything from his take on all three of the films to how he had never seen the original film in 3-D. "I would definitely stand in line for that," he smiled. He talked about his collection of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazines, and how he still has the Super-8 of *The Creature Walks Among Us*, his favorite Super-8 film. "The ending (of that film)," said Del Toro, who won Best Supporting Actor for *Traffic*, "is very moving and poetic. The Creature walks to the ocean, and can't get back into the water. Heck, I got chills down my back as he was speaking those lines."

I found the Creature all over the globe—in the home of Bob Burns, whose amazing museum is a national treasure of film history and props. As is Burns himself, who serves as curator, preserving our movie history.

Through *Creature Feature: 50 Years of the Gill-Man*, I got to answer all my childhood questions regarding the Creature, and then some. And I got the answers spoken by the No. 1 narrator in the business—Keith David. Sure, James Earl Jones has been the king of voice-overs for quite some time, and the fact remains that he's still great; however, you'd have to search far and wide to find a more regal voice—or a better person—than Keith. And as Eric can attest to, we've benefited in so many ways from the years of his friendship and kindness.

Currently, we are in the process of setting up a theatrical run for the film. In fact, as you are reading this, chances are it's likely playing in or near a city near you. In addition, we are putting together the home video/tvd and foreign deals. And a television deal is forthcoming.

It is my hope that this film can be viewed as what it was—a labor of love. One monster kid's long journey to track down one of his childhood heroes—that's right "hero," because after all, the Creature is the GOOD GUY!—and document its history. I also hope to bring back that same feeling when other monster kids were truly kids and had to stay up late to see the movie; the same feeling when that claw first came out of the water in black and white, and, the feeling when we purchased a new Creature model, or bought that summer issue of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* in the seventies with the cover showing the Creature floating underwater.

And I think that it's poignant since there are so many of us united in our love of the Creature—and of all the Universal Monsters, who are referenced in this project—that it began with four friends all banning together for a common cause. And it is my hope that this project will ensure that one of those friends—Ben Chapman—is never forgotten. And that it stands forever as a tribute to this great man and the character he portrayed.

Sam Borowski is the writer-producer of *Creature Feature: 50 Years of the Gill-Man*. The film, which was directed and also produced by Matthew Crick, is coming out in the Fall of 2008, just in time for Halloween. As of this printing, a distribution deal is in the works.



RICOU BROWNING: THE UNDERWATER CREATURE

INTERVIEW BY JOHN SKERCHOCK

Ricou Browning has a long list of credits that have earned him bragging rights in any social setting, yet Ricou is a soft-spoken man more than happy to wait until you have a question to ask him. To list all of his credits would take an additional issue, but here are some highlights. He grew up in Florida where he turned his love of swimming and diving into a job at the famous Weeki Wachee Springs Resort. Here he participated in numerous underwater shows, performing seemingly impossible feats underwater while secretly taking breaths from a hidden air hose. When the people at Disney wanted to cast their divers for their epic *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, they came to Weeki Wachee and selected Ricou and several of his co-workers.

Ricou's enthusiasm and skill led to his employment by Universal Studios to play a then unheard-of monster, the Creature from the Black Lagoon.

His ability to work comfortably underwater led to a number of jobs as a director of underwater scenes. For example, he did a vast amount of work in the television series *Sea Hunt* not only as an underwater director but as stunt double, usually for the bad guy, in any underwater scenes in the series.

Ricou developed the story for *Flipper* and worked on the first two movies. He was able to turn that success into a television series about the helpful dolphin. He even wrote over thirty episodes. He followed that series work with another one for Canadian television about a seal named *Sally*.

In addition to that work, Cubby Broccoli hired him to direct the underwater scenes for the James Bond classic *Thunderball*. Ricou was reunited with James Bond star Sean Connery when he worked on *Never Say Never Again*.

Ricou was so skilled at his job that whenever anyone wanted to film an underwater scene on the East Coast, Ricou was the man to see.

Today Ricou and his wife Fran, the parents of four children and grandparents of many, are happily retired and live with their many pets in Ricou's beloved Florida. And for the record his name is pronounced REE' ko and not Re KOO'.

SCREAM: You have the distinct honor of being the only person to star in all three Creature movies.

RICOU: Well, it almost didn't happen. How did you become involved with *Revenge of the Creature*?

I was at home when I got a telephone call from Jack Arnold. He said he was in Marineland shooting a sequel to the Creature from the Black Lagoon and he needed my help right away.

No one contacted you beforehand about a sequel?
No. I didn't know anything about it until that phone call. I dropped everything and drove up state to meet Jack.

Why would Universal come all the way back to Florida to film a sequel and not give you the courtesy of a phone call?

To answer that question would probably take more time than your readers want to spend here. It's simply not how Hollywood thinks.

Is that where you auditioned?
I didn't audition. I was handed the part over the phone. I worked all night with a few other people trying to cut the Creature costume down to my size because filming was scheduled to begin the next morning.

You didn't have your own costume?
No. The costume was made for John Wayne. He was supposed to play the underwater Creature for this movie. For some reason he couldn't make it to Florida to work in the picture. Fortunately, Jack Arnold remembered me and gave me a call.



What kind of problem did you have with Jack's costume?

The problem was that I am six foot tall. John was six foot four inches tall. We had to cut the costume down without damaging any of the detail, and when you are dealing with that kind of material, you have to be very, very careful.

Once we got it done, I had a costume to wear for filming. The other costume was cut down using the first as a model.

How many costumes were there?

Two and we could have used more. The costume was made out of foam rubber. That's why none exist today. Foam rubber isn't meant to last that long, but it's very buoyant. It tears easily and is difficult to patch.

When I was chained inside the tank at Marineland, there was a turtle that, for some reason, liked the heel of my one foot. He would chew off the corner and try to swim away with my foot. This was a big loggerhead turtle, and he just wouldn't leave my foot alone. Obviously you got it back.

Not without some difficulty. We had to keep repairing the heel. It was so bad that we couldn't film from certain angles for fear of showing the repairs.

They couldn't just order another suit?

No. Universal didn't want to spend much money on the sequel. In fact, they spent less money on *Revenge* than the original movie and even less on the third movie.

Tell me about the suit.

Well, it was made of foam rubber. It was very buoyant meaning it wouldn't stay underwater, and I had to wear weights to stay underwater.

Weren't they incorporated in the mold?

No.

How much weight did you have to wear to stay under?

I wish I could remember the exact poundage. I had a heavy chest plate, weights on my arms, legs, and ankles. I had to get it just right to be able to swim underwater without risk of drowning. And then, when we shot scenes in the ocean, I had to wear even more weight because salt water made the suit more buoyant.

How did you, a guy in Florida, get hired by Universal in California to play the Creature?
I got a telephone call from one of the people that I worked with on *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. The man told me that a film crew was coming to Florida to scout locations for a movie and asked if I could show them around. I met the group at the airport and showed them a number of places to shoot. One of the men was director Jack Arnold.

Jack asked me to swim in front of their cameras at some of these locations so that they could get some perspective. Apparently they liked what they shot because a short time after they returned to California Jack called me and offered me a job in the movie. I agreed and they flew me to come to California for a fitting.

Did you know what the movie was about?

I had an idea. They told me that I'd play a monster and they needed to fit me for a costume.

Did you spend much time there?

Well, that depends on how you look at it. I was probably there for about two months working on the suit. There was a lot of trial and error in creating the Creature. The first version of the suit was a simple looter that I had to wear. The effects people then began to glue pieces of foam rubber onto me to make the monster. The only problem was that when they put the first piece on, the chest plate, I started to get hot. The glue was having a chemical reaction to the foam rubber and it was starting to burn. The mixture burned through the looter and burned my chest. I was able to get out of the thing before any serious damage was done.

Did they make a body cast of you?

Yes, after that incident. That was an odd feeling. They made it and then sculpted the suit to fit onto the cast. When the suit was finished they dressed me up. It didn't take long. I would say about fifteen minutes at most. They made some small changes here and there until they were satisfied. Once they were happy, they had me spend a week swimming in the water tank to see how the costume would work underwater.

How did that feel?

Well, the first time we found out how buoyant the costume was. I had to add the weights. I couldn't stay underwater without them.

Did you wear a facemask?

We tried it, but it made the head too big, and once water seeped into the mask, I was practically blind so I went in the water without one. That wasn't much better because my eyes were about an inch away from the eyes of the costume, and the eyes in the mask were so small.

Did you have any input into the making of the costume?

Yes. When I walked, the feet, being foam, simply stood straight up, and the hands were loose and wobbly just like rubber. They didn't look real at all. I suggested that they reinforce the feet and hands with wires to stiffen them and stop them from acting on their own.

Were you able to return to Florida with a Creature costume?

No. When they were finished with me, I flew home. They did more work on the costume. They shipped the costume to me a month later and filming began almost immediately.

So that was about three months for them to make your costume...

Yes. It took them three months. I had three underwater costumes. I don't know how many Ben had for on the land. Then, with *Revenge* I only had two costumes to work with, and by the third they only gave me one. Because of how easily foam rubber rips and tears, we had a difficult time trying to make those suits last.

How long did you work on *Revenge of the Creature*?

I was there for about a month. I wasn't just the underwater Creature. I did help around the set as well.

Was all the filming done in Florida?

As far as I can tell, except perhaps the scene with Clint Eastwood. We shot at Marineland, in Jacksonville, Florida, and Silver Springs.

So all of the Creature shots were filmed in Florida.

Yes.

In the beginning there is a scene where the Creature jumps out of the lagoon and grabs a pelican. Was that you?

Yes, and it wasn't a pelican. It was a water bird. It was one of my pets.

So it wasn't injured.

No. I jumped up and grabbed it, basically bucking it under and then I let it go. It was very quick and the camera did a good job of catching that jump.



That scene was special to you.

Yes, it was one of my two contributions to the Creature legacy. The first was in *Creature from the Black Lagoon* when I suggested that when Julie tosses her cigarette into the water it follows down to reveal the Creature watching. And in *Revenge of the Creature* I figured that we should show how the Creature lives so I suggested that scene.

When the Creature is in the tank at Marineland there are scenes of him being fed fish. Were they plastic fish to limit the threat of the sharks from attacking you?

No. They were real fish. They were meant to attract the sharks so that you could see how big and fearless the Creature was.

You weren't afraid?

No. I was used to sharks in the water. I have worked with them and have swum with them.

There is a rumor that Tom Hennessy almost drowned while filming *Revenge*.

That is wrong. There is a scene where the Creature walks into a nightclub and picks up the girl and walks off. He gets to the pier. At this time he is holding stunt girl Ginger Stanley. She did the stunts for Julie in the first movie and worked with me at the Weeki Wachee Springs underwater show. The Creature with girl in hand jumps into the water and they both go under.

In any stunt like this you have to take precautions. We had safety people available and I was one of them. There were four of us in two row boats out in the water just in case something would go wrong.

We had spotlights shining in the water where they were supposed to surface, only they didn't come up under the lights. They surfaced out of the lights and we couldn't see them. I jumped into the water and found Ginger. I got her to a buoy. The other safety boat found Tom floating in the water.

You couldn't sink in that suit because it was all foam rubber and he wasn't wearing weights like I did in the underwater scenes. He was okay.

There is another rumor stating that Tom was one of the swimmers in the tank at Marineland when you were chained to the bottom.

No, that's false. Tom didn't do anything like that. He was a fine man and a good stunt man, but he wasn't used in any of those scenes.

How did you and Tom get along?

We got along pretty well. We even roomed together for a while. He had a good sense of humor, too.



Who said the Creature didn't get the girl?



How is that?

I came back to the room after work to take a shower, only to find a baby alligator in the bathtub. It surprised the heck out of me! He could have warned me or something.

Tom bought the thing as a pet to take back home to California and decided to keep it in the tub until we were done with the movie.

Do you keep in touch with Tom?

Well, our paths never crossed after that because he was a West Coast person and I worked here on the East Coast. Then, a few years ago we got together and I got his address and an email address. He would write once in a while. I was trying to get him to come to some of these horror shows because I know fans want to meet him.

What happened?

He told me he couldn't do it. He had bad knees and it was difficult for him to move around. Shortly after that I lost contact with him. My letters were returned and the email address is no good.

So you don't know where he is?

No. And I'd like to talk to him again.

How was your relationship with Ben Chapman, the land Creature from the first movie?

It was good. I don't know if I ever met him when we were working on the first movie. All of his shots were done in California while mine were in Florida. We may have met while working on the costumes but I don't know. Some things going that far back you just can't remember. When I was being fit for my costume, I knew they wanted someone taller for the land scenes. So mine and Ben's paths may have crossed at that time but I can't recall.

If you look at pictures of the underwater Creature and the land Creature, you'll see an extra row or layer of scales on the land Creature, right across the chest, that was added to compensate for Ben's height.

Is this what you had to remove from Wayan's costumes before you could wear them?

Yes, and we just simply couldn't rip or cut it off. We had to make it look like part of his body.

There was a rumor going around that you and Ben didn't get along. Do you know anything about that?

I was surprised to hear of it. After the first Creature movie, I hadn't seen Ben in well over fifty years. We got together at a horror show and had a good time. How anyone could interpret that as not getting along is news to me.

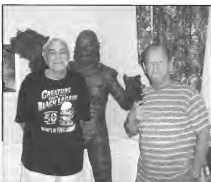
We met again frequently at a variety of shows until Ben's health got the best of him. The only thing that I can think of, and I would kid Ben about this in later years, was that Ben would only sign pictures of the land Creature because that is the part he played. I will sign any Creature picture because the Creature is the Creature whether he is on land or in the water, so why should a fan be disappointed?

Did Universal ever approach you about doing audio commentary for the Creature DVD collection?

No. Here is one of the Universal horror classics where most of the stars were still alive—Ben Chapman, Julie Adams, Tom Hennessey, and myself—and they wouldn't do it. I know they never approached Ben or Julie.

What are your impressions of Ben?

Ben was one of those rare individuals that enjoyed life to the fullest and always seemed to have a good time. He made me laugh a few times. He simply enjoyed life and I think that's how he'd want to be remembered.



Ben, Ricou, and friend.

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MEXICAN FANTASY FILMS THE BEST OF THE REST ARTICLE BY DAVID WILT

Knowledge and appreciation of Mexican cinema outside of Mexico is largely circumscribed by language and availability. Fantasy film fans who don't speak Spanish and have no "inside source" for films may be tantalized by the mention of certain movies, but until recently could only see the handful of dubbed titles (or the odd co-production) released to theaters or to television. Even the DVD revolution, with its penchant for resurrecting cult titles and the (relative) ease of sub-titling, has barely scratched the surface, with legal issues and commercial concerns trumping any objective evaluation of film quality in determining what gets released on DVD in the USA, Mexico, or elsewhere.

The following is a categorized list of Mexican fantasy films which are probably not familiar to English-speaking audiences, may never receive wide distribution, and yet deserve recognition and—should the opportunity arise—definitely be watched. Omitted from these lists are titles which are (or have been) available in English-friendly versions, such as the Beverly Wilshire, BCI, Rise Above, CasaNegra, and Mondo Macabro DVDs. I've also left out films which are fairly well-known internationally (such as Santo movies), even if they aren't on DVD in subtitled versions. Some of the movies below are available on Spanish-only DVDs or in bootleg form, and perhaps others will someday get wider commercial exposure... but don't hold your breath.

This isn't intended to be a definitive "best of" listing, but rather a glimpse of part of the iceberg that's still under water, so to speak.

VAMPIRES

El pueblo fantasma [The Ghost Town, 1963]: inspired by vampire-Westerns like *Curse of the Undead* (1959)—but pre-dating Billy the Kid Meets Dracula (1966)—*El pueblo fantasma* tells the story of a vampire outlaw whose gunslinging prowess increases with each victim. But a little thing called a "bullet" (made from melting down a silver religious medallion of course) will fix his wagon! One of a series of Westerns starring Rodolfo de Anda as "El Texano"—the others were strictly routine, with no fantasy content—this is certainly a curiosity. Fernando Luján plays the black-dia "Rio Kid," who sports gigantic fangs when the urge strikes, but mostly shoots his victims (whose bodies then vanish if unclear exactly how he "absorbs" their talents. Perhaps it's better that we don't know...)

El imperio de Drácula [The Empire of Dracula, 1966]: *El imperio de Drácula* is a fairly stylish, "straight" horror film which attempts to emulate the colorful, lush decor and costumes of Hammer Films. By the way, there's nobody named "Dracula" here—Eric del Castillo plays "Baron Draculstein," possibly a distant relative of the "Wolfenstein" or "Frankenstein" families. Dracula, Prince of Darkness "inspired" a lot of this picture—like the British movie, *Imperio* begins with the destruction of the vampire who is exposed to sunlight and is stalked through the heart, crumbling into dust. Years later, hermanjón Igor kidnaps a young woman and drains her blood into a coffin containing Draculstein's ashes, magically reviving the monster like a package of dried soup—all you add is blood! The producers of *imperio* apparently weren't too sanguine about del Castillo's box-office clout: not only was singer Lucha Villa top-billed, the movie's posters used an image of Germán "El Vampiro" Robles instead of del Castillo! This is notable as the first full-bore Mexican horror movie shot in color.



They may be small, but their appetite is huge!
It's those pesky cannibal dwarfs from 1971's
The Incredible Professor Zovex.

La endemoniada [The Possessed One, 1967]: what if Mario Bava's *Black Sunday* had been made in color? And instead of Barbara Steele as the resurrected witch, it was blonde and busty Argentine actress Liberia Leblanc? And what if the whole thing was set in 1980s Mexico? Why, then you'd have *La endemoniada*! Fausta (Leblanc) murders one of her lovers in 18th-century Mexico. The Inquisition decides to teach her a lesson, so Fausta (you think maybe that name has some significance?) has a metal mask hammered onto her face and is walled up alive in her mansion (with no chance for parole, the Inquisition was just that strict). 400 years later, Fausta is revived by vampire Gonzalo, and replaces the possessed Lucia, who coincidentally happens to be her exact physical double. Fausta does Lucia the favor of murdering her dull, middle-aged husband, but in the end dries up into a lifeless mummy; Gonzalo is stalked by Ricardo, Lucia's new, young and handsome squeeze. Colorful and melodramatic, *La endemoniada* features a topless Leblanc and—for the ladies—a shirtless Juan Miranda, a former "Mr. Mexico." Frankly, however, vampire Gonzalo doesn't have much to do.

La dinastía Drácula [The Dracula Dynasty, 1978]: not exactly a remake of the classic *El vampiro*, *La dinastía Drácula* is more of a tribute to the earlier movie. Note to gringos—the "Fabian" (aka Fabián Aranza) who appears in this movie is not (as frequently and incorrectly stated) the pop singer of the same name (aka Fabian Forte) nor does he play the vampire (that would be actor Roberto Nelson, sporting some hellacious mullet chop sideburns). The Inquisition (remember them?) dives a stake through the heart of the evil Duke Antonio in 1585, burying him in a cursed grove. 300 years later, vampire Baron Von Helsing (I) and the Duke's immortal lover return: they want to purchase the *hacienda* where the grove is located so they can resurrect the Duke. Local doctor Ramiro (Fabian) and priest Father Juan team up to eradicate the troublesome vampires. A far cry from the stylish *El vampiro*, *La dinastía Drácula* still makes some attempt to be atmospheric, borrowing bits from Stoker's original novel as well as its classic Mexican predecessor. By the way, like *El imperio de Drácula*, *Dinastía* does not feature any vampire named "Dracula" (or even "Alucard"), despite the title.

DEADLY DWARFS, MENACING MIDGETS, SINISTER LITTLE PEOPLE

El increíble Profesor Zovex [The Incredible Professor Zovex, 1971]: escape artist Zovex made just two movies before his untimely death (while performing a stunt for a circus). This one pits him against mad scientist Dr. Druso, who has quite the menagerie of monsters (failed experiments) in his castle. Among them are a horde of cannibal dwarfs, a big guy with fangs, and other unpleasant fellows with nasty deformities and dispositions to match. Zovex, a martial artist with super telepathic powers learned in the mysterious Far East, isn't quick enough to save his assistant Virginia—she has her skull sawed open and her pulsating brain used to reanimate a tall, skinny corpse—but he does finally wreck Druso's scheme. The little cannibals escape from their cells and chow down on the bad guys, things catch fire and blow up, and only Zovex and his friends (but not Virginia) escape. Although somewhat dajonized—Zovex performs two escape acts in a nightclub-act setting—the climax gets rather intense with a lot of screaming, loud music, grotesque monsters, zooms, jump cuts, and other attention-grabbing techniques—plus those cannibal dwarfs.

Vuelven los Campeones Justicieros [The Champions of Justice Return, 1972] after the success of *Los Campeones Justicieros* (1970) the first all-star Mexican wrestling movie—which featured, among other treats, super-midget bad guys—producer Rogelio Agrasánchez went back to the same well numerous times, mixing and matching his wrestling lineups, while retaining his penchant for miniature villains. To save costs, he farmed out production to Guatemala, adding a curious veneer to the pictures. *Vuelven los Campeones Justicieros* did have the benefit of a Mexican director, wrestling and horror movie pro Federico Curiel, held over from the first film, but the “Champions of Justice” lineup changed. Blue Demon and Mil Mascaras were still on board, but their sidekicks were second-tier grapplers El Fantasma Blanco, El Anísipon, and El Rayo de Jalisco. The plot revolves around sexy villainess Gatusy, normal-sized henchman Gato Negro, and her pack of midget rat-men. In the opening sequence, the ratties abduct the enormously fat King Frank from a hotel room, later stealing moon rocks from a museum and abducting a famous singer. Mil Mascaras almost gets turned into a rat-man himself, but the Campeones prevail. In fact, they returned for a third movie, *Triunfo de los Campeones Justicieros* (1973), and once again were menaced by undersized villains, this time inter-dimensional alien dwarfs. All the Campeones movies are fun, but *Vuelven* gets the nod because of the rat-men, whose costumes resemble foibe pajamas or Halloween costumes. Verily, Prods. Filmicas Agrasánchez was a true friend to the little-people performers of Latin America.

Muerte infernal [Infernal Death, 1987] as discussed in the article on Alfredo Salazar in Screen #12, this movie features a mummified dwarf jester from the Middle Ages who comes back to life in the 1980s to rape and murder.



WEREWOLVES

La loba [The She Wolf, 1964]: A blonde female werewolf! A male werewolf named “Bernstein”! A trained werewolf-hunting dog! Professor Fernández (José Elías Moreno, later the scientist in *Night of the Bloody Apes*) and Dr. Bernstein want to cure lycanthropy, which afflicts Bernstein and the Professor’s daughter, Clara, Bernstein’s girlfriend. Yes... werewolf romance! But a mysterious stranger and his dog track down the hairy monsters who have been killing various innocent farmers, woodcutters, and the like. Only you know a werewolf can only be killed by a special dog or an ivory dagger? This is a good film, played straight, and effectively directed by the under-rated Rafael Balado.

Cazador de demonios [Demon Hunter, 1983]: one of the better Mexican fantasy films of the '80s, *Cazador de demonios* combines Mexican folklore with standard horror movie tropes. Indigenous bruto Tobias is murdered by a farmer and comes back to life as a burly werewolf (he actually more closely resembles a were-bear, and is actually referred to as a nahuatl, an animal-spirit). The local doctor and priest realize this is the devil’s work. The beast abducts the doctor’s wife and has his hairy way with her, then kills the priest, but is eventually done in by a silver (not ivory) dagger. *Cazador* is quite slick, with a strong cast, decent production values, good pacing, and adequate (although never clearly seen) monster makeup.

Comilhões—el Hombre Lobo [Fangs—the Wolf Man, 1990]: one of the best Mexican movies to feature elaborate, American Werewolf in London and Howling-style werewolf transformation effects, *Comilhões* was directed by René Cardona III, a chip off the old block. Working stiff Cristóbal (Miguel Ángel Rodríguez) is given a statue loaded with precious gems by a mysterious woman named Tara, and uses the jewels to try and buy his way into society so he can marry his rich sweetheart Susana. Oddly enough, anyone who receives one of the gems is later viciously slain by a werewolf! Tara jealously orders Cristóbal (aka the werewolf) to murder Susana but love conquers all, and it’s the evil Tara who joins the choir invisible (ah, and Cristóbal dies too—after all, he did murder a bunch of people—but the wealthy Susana is OK!). *Comilhões* is pleasant enough, with some decent effects and makeup in the werewolf scenes (they’re too dark, though, making it difficult to see) and sexy actresses Olivia Colina (who wears some bright red-leather pants) and Julieta Rossen, as Susana and Tara.

MAD SCIENTISTS

El superloco [The Super Madman, 1936] Spanish actor Carlos Villarías is best known today as Bela Lugosi’s alter ego in Universal’s 1931 Spanish-language version of *Dracula*. *El misterio del rostro pálido* [Mystery of the Pale Face, 1935] and *El superloco* were two attempts to establish him as a horror star in Mexico. Didn’t work. Here, Villarías is Dr. Dyens, who has halted the aging process by exerting the power of his mind over his baser emotions and physical weaknesses. He also has a pet “monster” (more of a woolly-haired crazy guy in a ripped shirt, really) he wisely keeps locked up in an attic cell. When Margarita, his assistant Alberto’s girlfriend, pays a visit, the smitten Dyens loses control of his emotions and makes a move on her, sadly, this causes him to suddenly turn into a doddering old man and he’s tossed out of a window by his unleashed monster. *El superloco* is harmed by an over-abundance of comic relief (courtesy of top-billed Leopoldo O’Ryan), but Villarías skews the ham thickly and this early Mexican fantasy film is worth a look.

El baúl macabro [The Macabre Trunk, 1936] although later famous as a prolific director of cult films (numerous Santo and Wrestling Women movies, plus *Night of the Bloody Apes*, *Survival* and other sleazy gems) and the father of exploitation maven René Cardona Jr., René Cardona Sr. got his start as an actor. In *El baúl macabro* he’s young Dr. Armando, the suspect in a series of mutilation murders. The real culprit is mad scientist Renán (Ramón Pareda), who’s trying to cure his wife’s paralysis using blood extracted from the corpses of young women he snatches, later dropping their dismembered body parts in various city trash bins. (The Corpse Vanishes plowed the same field a few years later, substituting Bela Lugosi for Pareda). Renán learns Armando’s girlfriend Alicia has just the right type of blood to cure his wife, so he kidnaps her. Despite promising efforts like *El superloco*, *El misterio del rostro pálido*, and *El baúl macabro*, homegrown horror movies wouldn’t really blossom in Mexico for another 20 years, so these early efforts are rare and interesting oddities.

El monstruo resucitado [The Revived Monster, 1953]: made by cult director Chano Urueta (*The Witch’s Mirror*, *The Brainiac*), *El monstruo resucitado* is one of the finest Mexican fantasy films in the pre-*El vampiro* era. Newspaper reporter Nora interviews the mysterious Dr. Ling, a man who was born so horribly disfigured that he always wears dark glasses and a mask and is a bitter redneck (ironically, he’s a great plastic surgeon but this physician can’t heal himself). Nora protests that a person’s soul counts, not his face. To prove it, she dares Ling to unmask. He does, and she faints! What a social faux pas! However, Nora recovers and Ling vows to change his life. But when he hears her talking to her editor about her story, Ling decides she’s been exploiting him for her own ends. Stalling a handsome corpse from the morgue, he reanimates it with the life force of a gorilla-creature stashed in his lab. Dubbing his creation “Ariel,” Ling orders it to bring Nora to his house, where the doctor will mutilate her face. However, Ariel takes a cue from Dr. Dyens’s monster, and tosses his creator out a window to his death, just before he’s shot to death by Nora’s editor. Spanish actor José María Linares Rivas plays Dr. Ling, wearing about 5 pounds of makeup that makes him resemble Lon Chaney Sr. in *The Phantom of the Opera*. The photography and art direction are excellent, and Nora is played by beautiful Czech actress Miroslava. There’s not much got to like about this movie.

Rostro infernal [Infernal Face, 1962] almost as outé as *The Brainiac* albeit a bit more restrained, *Rostro infernal* tells the tale of Count Brankovan, an immortal scientist who hides his mummy-like face behind a lifelike mask. Brankovan’s main trick is extracting the brains of people,

liquifying them in a futuristic blender, and drinking the goo. This allows him to take on the intellect and ability of the victim, such as a concert pianist. But in a clever plot twist, Brankovan learns he also has absorbed some of the weaknesses of the brain-Surper donors when he tries to murder his snooty girlfriend (the old dude is kind of a womanizer), he can’t do it! Ever resourceful, Count B murders two hired assassins and drinks their brains, adding murderousness to his repertoire. However, his plans eventually unravel and Brankovan commits high-voltage suicide, so your brains are safe... for now. Note: This was allegedly available to U.S. TV in a dubbed version as *The Incredible Face of Dr. B*. (from the same packager who handled the “Neutron” films), but nobody I know has ever seen it.



ALIEN INVADERS

Arachnids infemalis (Infernal Spiders, 1966) This obscure Blue Demon adventure "bombers" stock footage from two of the least impressive Hollywood science-fiction movies of the 1950s, *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (1958) and *Teenagers from Outer Space* (1959). The soundtrack also uses music from the *Themes from Horror Movies* record album (possibly purchased from an ad in *Famous Monsters* magazine—that's where I bought my copy, back in the 1980s!). Despite these copyright-dubious practices, *Arachnids infemalis* is actually an entertaining movie about spider-aliens from the "Arachnes" galaxy who land on earth and eat human brains. Although the aliens generally take human form, in one inspired wrestling scene, the hard of Blue Demon's opponent changes into a big spider and (still attached to his arm) it kind of looks like a hard of Blue Demon's opponent. Of course, the hard of Blue Demon's opponent is also a hard of Blue Demon's opponent. The match was disqualification, although rumor has it that Vince McMahon is tried to sign him up with the World Wrestling Federation.

El Hijo de Alma Grande (1974): another Blue Demon clash with ash invaders, this time filmed in the nation of Belize. The title character is an American Indian martial arts expert, the alleged "son" of Western comic book character Alma Grande (who'd been in two films in the 1960s), who shares hero chores with Blue Demon. Marica and Noh are two aliens who have set up shop near the Mayan ruins in Belize. They enslave villagers in the region, and periodically transport earnings back to their planet in a device that looks like a big blue trashcan. For reasons unexplained, the aliens have to have eye transplants every so often, and early in the film there is a gory scene where Noh gouges out a man's eyes with two metal spikes, apparently for his personal use. Blue Demon Alma Grande Jr. team up to put an end to this unauthorized organ-harvesting operation.

Supercán el invencible [Supercán the invincible, 1970] and **Supercán y el niño del espacio** [Supercán and the Space Boy, 1972]. "Supercán" (his name seems to be a combination of Superman and Tarzan, although the character resembles neither one) was a superhero created by Rogelio Agrasánchez and portrayed by wrestler Alfonso Mora in a handful of 1970s movies. *Supercán el invencible*, bolstered with stock footage from *Devil Girl from Mars*, tells the story of three aliens (since this is an Agrasánchez movie, it should come as no surprise that they're little people) who visit Earth. One is wounded by hunters and has to be rescued by Supercán from an irate mob. With little further ado, the aliens depart. That's it. (I think somebody saw *Supercán and the Mole Man*. OK, so the plot is thin, but *Supercán el invencible* does include a few ambitious effects not usually seen in Mexican movies of this ilk. For example, Supercán flies, not only by the usual "lying on a table with a fan blowing in his face" method, but also—apparently—by dangling from an airplane while hanging onto a rope). *Supercán y el niño del espacio* is more coherent. Shot in Guatemala by local director Rafael Larraza—who cast his son and daughter in major roles—the story is a sci-fi tale of a boy who is able to harness the power of the sun as a source of energy. However, one of the scientists he enlists to help decides he wants all of the power for himself, and becomes super-villain "Diabólico." To thwart Diabólico's, um, diabolical scheme, Supercán is beamed down to Earth from Arima. Diabólico is defeated but Cino returns to his home planet without divulging his secret power source, thus dooming Earth to reliance on fossil fuels for the next few decades.

JOHN CARRADINE

Autopsia de un fantasma [Autopsy on a Ghost] (1966), well-known director Ismael Rodríguez imported no fewer than four Hollywood performers for this wacky comedy—Carradine (who made seven movies in Mexico during his career), Basil Rathbone, Cameron Mitchell, and beauty queen Amadee Chabot—to headline his cast of supernatural Mexican comedians (not that Carradine or Rathbone were especially youthful either). Rathbone plays Canuto Pérez, sentenced to eternity in hell for a lifetime of womanizing unless, within four days, a woman falls in love with him. The problem? He's a ghost, and his spirit is trapped in an old mansion. God orders the Devil (Carradine, decked out with horns, a tail, pitchfork, the works) to bring 4 women to the house so Canuto can have a whack at them. Satan accomplishes part of this by evicting wacky scientist Moléculo (Mitchell) and his family—including his sexy daughter (Chabot) and his little boy's robot nanny "Robotón" (wasn't she Bender's girlfriend on *Futurama*?)—then allowing them to take refuge in the mansion. A bunch of other people also arrive, searching for hidden loot from a bank robbery. Shenanigans result. The final film for Basil "Sherlock Holmes" Rathbone, who died soon after making this film (oddly enough, Boris Karloff also died shortly after making his Mexican movies here...).

Las vampiras [The Vampire Women] (1967). Carradine made four pictures for Vergara (the same company who hired Boris Karloff to make four quackies before his death); all were shot at the same time, but none of them were released in English-language versions, despite their obvious (to me) commercial potential. *Las vampiras* gets the nod for several reasons, including the presence of masked wrestler Mil Máscaras, sexy vampire women in green leopards (including babes Maria Duval and Maura Monti), and Carradine himself as the king vampire who's locked in a cage by his unity subjects! All of the Vergara movies are introduced by (a dubbed) Carradine playing himself. Federico Curjel, a former comic book artist and actor, directed a number of lively Mexican fantasy films. *Enigma de muerte*, another of Carradine's Vergara movies directed by Curjel and co-starring Mil Máscaras, is not as interesting (it's about fugitive Nazis working in a Mexican circus and has no fantasy content), while *Señora Muerte* (Mrs. Death) and *Pecado diabólico* (Diabolical Poed—a version of "Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde") suffer from too little Carradine and no wrestlers at all.

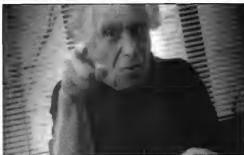


To My Great Chagrin The Mad Genius of Brother Theodore

Interview by Shade Rupe

Editor's note: One of the main reasons our seventh issue of Screen is in such short supply nowadays is because of our Brother Theodore interview. Anyone who has ever seen Theodore perform, whether on television or stage, will never forget his stage presence. It's been seven years since Theodore has left us, and I can safely say we'll never see another soul like him. However, his legacy lives on in a new documentary by Jeff Sumarel titled To My Great Chagrin. We're also pleased to report that it can now be purchased on DVD at Jeff's website: www.spontaneous.net.

It's only appropriate that Jeff's interview was conducted by Shade Rupe. He was responsible for getting Theodore to speak with us in Screen #7.



SCREEN: Why did you decide to do a documentary on Brother Theodore?

JEFF SUMEREL: It sort of found me. Several years ago, I began splitting my living between South Carolina and New York. One afternoon as I was walking along the street, after going to the Quad to see the uncensored version of *Godzilla*, I noticed this welcoming Bohemian-style theater—the 13th Street Theatre. I thought, "Now, that looks like the sort of place that might be willing to let me do one of my old solo performances." So, I went in, and sure enough, Edith O'Hara, the founder, and Sandra Nordgren, the manager, were both very hospitable. They showed me around, and at one point, Edith asked me, "Did you know Brother Theodore did his show here for 17 years?" I said, "No I didn't. What a character he was?" She said, "Well, he still is. He's now 92 years old!"

As I was leaving, I said, "Hey, tell Theodore he's got several fans in South Carolina." And for some unknown reason, added, "If he ever wants a documentary made about him, just give me a call." So, two weeks later, I get a call from Sandra saying, "I think Theodore would like to do the documentary." I was shocked because I was sort of joking when I made the offer. Never dreaming he'd be interested. Fortunately for me, he took me up on it.

And, honestly, I didn't expect it to really evolve to the point it did. I kept thinking a door would close—with Theodore or someone else. But everyone was so supportive. Even after his death, his friends and colleagues encouraged me to continue. And at that point, I sensed and appreciated the opportunity that was presented to me, so I decided I should pursue it the best I could.

That was in early 2001. For the next five years I worked on it a few weeks each year, trying to gather interviews and various resource materials. Then, in the fall of 2006, Jeter Rhodes (the editor/associate producer) and I decided to devote our full time in order to complete it by May of 2007...

You did get to meet Theodore, though?

Yeah, for four or five nights I interviewed him. Or perhaps more accurately... listened to him.

At his home?

Yeah, it was just him there in his one-room apartment. His physical condition was rather delicate at that point. In fact, that was one of the reasons we came up with the device of the puppet in the film to be able to use the audio from those sessions. We felt his physical appearance from those interviews might be distracting if used throughout the film.

How did you get some of the celebrity interviews?

Most were from contact information provided by Theodore's colleagues, friends, and beneficiaries. However, there were several fortunate coincidences that lead to some people. For example, meeting Henry Gibson (*Burbs*, *Boston Legal*, *Laugh-In*). That came about because my wife at the time was in an Encore musical series, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, here in New York. She was in the dressing room telling some fellow actors that I was producing a documentary about a bizarre character named Brother Theodore. And Henry Gibson, who was playing King Arthur, happened to be walking by right at that time, and stopped in his tracks when he heard "Brother Theodore." And he told her to tell me he would love to share his stories and insights. He was extremely entertaining and insightful. Also, a genuinely considerate person.

In fact it was Henry who referred me to Penn & Teller. And then started a sort of slow chain reaction of meeting people.

Like Dick Cavett and Eric Bogosian?

Right. Plus, Jack Finelli, the executor of Theodore's estate, was extremely helpful and supportive. And he provided contact numbers from Theodore's address book and suggested people who might be interested. There were some I didn't either have time to get, or the scheduling didn't work out. I was slated to meet George Carlin, who was a Theodore fan, but he had a very bad case of flu the week I was in L.A.

So, I'd imagine you have more interview footage than what ended up being used in the film?

Yeah, and because the interviewees aren't seen in the film, we would like to have some of those interviews in their entirety as DVD features.

Why did you make the choice to keep all the interviews off-screen as voice-overs?

After a test screening of a rough-cut that *did* show the interviewees, it struck me as distraction from Theodore and his story.

And also, because the cutting was so quick from one person's comment to another, I was feeling it was pretty clunky in identifying these people. So, Jeter and I did another cut without seeing the interviewees.

And that started to click, especially when we considered Theodore's view on celebrity, or his struggle with celebrity. Having just the voice-overs seemed to level the playing field, so to speak. That everyone's input and comments were equally valid. Another reason—or result—that came about later was, Theodore was finally the star of his own movie. He seemed to always want to be the star of a film. So, it occurred to us, that *To My Great Chagrin* could be that film. We did a couple of test screenings of that edit and it felt like it best served Theodore.

So, you were able to contact all these people just out of Theodore's own address book?

Let's see, I'd say 60-70% of them, and then a lot of others I contacted through the Screen Actors Guild, through their agents or managers.

It was really such a testament to Theodore that all of these people were so willing to participate. Without question, really as far as who I was or what was my intent. I think they just felt Theodore deserved to be archived and perhaps reach a broader audience.

Jeter and I were just hoping we could make something respectful and convey Theodore's amazing presence and talent. It was so touching at the premiere at MoMA (Museum of Modern Art), when Lon Balzer was so complimentary, saying he was so close to Theodore all those years, yet seeing all the material compiled and woven together made him feel he now knew him better than he ever did. One of my concerns was that I had this incredible great subject—Theodore—and that I would come up short on doing him justice.

It's great Dick Cavett was involved.

Yeah, that was wonderful. He evidently was rather close to Theodore, and had known him for many years. Theodore was on *The Dick Cavett Show* in the early '70s, so that archival footage was an integral part in the film. In fact, when I saw the Cavett Show, it was so well done I thought, "Why are we doing a documentary?" But Dick Cavett was very encouraging that we do this in-depth version of Theodore's story.

Some of the archival footage is amazing. You also found *Black Widow* in there.

Yes, *Black Widow* was a 1940's movie serial that had Theodore playing a sort of sage, wearing a turban and sitting in a regal chair. I think his character's name was "Mol-Mu." We also use footage from *Gums*, the soft porn Jaws-spoof in which Theodore plays a Nazi Quint. We also have clips from the film *Gang Wars* as well as some of Theodore's television appearances such as *Tonight with Steve Allen* from 1954 and a clip from an old *Merv Griffin Show* with Jerry Lewis.



Do you know how Joe Dante chose Brother Theodore for his role in *The 'Burbs*?

I believe Joe saw Theodore perform back in the '80s here in New York. And I think—as with most people who saw Theodore—he stuck in Joe's head. Then when *'Burbs* came up, Joe said he had always wanted to do something with Theodore. So he jumped at getting him. During that movie is when the writers' strike was going on, so I believe there was a fair amount of improvisation during the shooting. So, we thought there might be a lot of outtakes of Theodore. But there weren't because Theodore was not an improviser. Even though people thought a lot of his material was coming off the top of his head, it was really very carefully scripted.

It almost seems that there would be whole shows taped from the 13th Street Theatre. Did you see anything like that?

Yeah, there are. They're all on VHS, just a camera locked down at the back of the theater. We used those the best we could, by manipulating them in various ways to create some rather groovy effects that we thought Theodore might appreciate.

Wasn't there a studio production of his act?

Right, Jack Finelli, a very close friend of Theodore's, produced a three-camera shoot. I believe Theodore was around 92 at the time. We used some of that performance tape. But considering Theodore's age and energy, the performance and material is almost more prophetic than entertaining, for example, when he says, "I'm in the prime of my senility." When you see him say that at 92, it has a very different feeling than the past performances.

The only recording I heard that seem to capture how a lot of people described what it was like seeing Theodore perform was the 1955 recording at Carnegie Hall. It's very energetic, and you can just picture these people in coats and ties and pillbox hats sitting there thinking, "My God, who or what are we seeing?"

Yeah, those were legit releases. There's another Carnegie Hall recording available.

Yeah, Coral Records Presents . . . (Brother Theodore). And there's *A Tongue of Madness*. Also, there's a 45 RPM of "Lisioitall Bindel," one of his better known segments.

Considering the length of his shows and the various performance tapes, we had quite a challenge. Due to the natural time constraints of a documentary, we were limited in how much we could use to convey his performance, yet we wanted to maintain the integrity of his work.

Many people we spoke to would say, "You just had to be there. You had to see him live to get the full effect." And I thought, "Oh, great. We're trying to make a documentary, but to get the impact of Theodore you had to have seen him live."





Portions of *To My Great Chagrin* are told by a Brother Theodore puppet!

A friend of mine is a film historian, and I had told him about the project. And early on, being familiar with Theodore's personal history and performance, he gave some useful advice: "I think you've got to forget that you're making a documentary, and you've got to create an interpretation of Theodore. And since Theodore's show and personality were relentless, do the same with the film." So, that's how we approached it, although cautiously. We did a visual interpretation of Theodore, playing a lot off of Dadaism and Expressionism, because he was a big lover of that style and grew up with it.



Has everyone who participated in the film seen it?

A lot of them have: Theodore's beneficiaries, his son, and many of the interviewees in New York who attended the premiere at MoMA. We've also had screenings at film festivals in Philadelphia, Atlanta, Charlotte and have entered others. Also, we've

been contacted to have a presentation at the Museum of TV & Radio in New York.

Theodore's son Tom was talking with Eric Bogosian after the MoMA screening, and attended the reception. He seemed pleased with the film.

Yeah, I was very relieved about that. There's a small one screen theater on Bainbridge Island, where he lives. And we're hoping to have a screening there so his friends can get to see it.

You also interviewed Woody Allen. How did you get him?

I think Theodore's estate had an old phone number for Woody Allen's post-production facility. So I started there. It took about five requests over four years to coordinate an available time. His assistant was very patient and nice enough to keep re-submitting the requests.

I kept holding out even though we were quickly reaching a cutoff point in post-production. Fortunately, the scheduling finally worked out.

Who were some of the people that you were hoping would be in it that you weren't able to get in touch with?

Merv Griffin. I tried to reach him several times over the years. Out of the interviews we weren't able to get, that's probably the one I would have most liked to have gotten. I also was eager to interview Jerry Stiller and was scheduled. But that day he was injured in a taxi accident so we had to cancel. I also would have liked to have heard Jerry Lewis' version of being on *The Merv Griffin Show* with Theodore. From the archival clip, the two of them start going at each other. And from what I was told by Theodore, it was not an act.

Why was Theodore hitting him?

That was Theodore's first TV appearance. He said also on the show was a fellow in his early 20's making his singing debut on national television. Theodore said when the fellow finished and left, Jerry Lewis starting making fun of him. So, as Theodore was sitting in the green room waiting to go on, he became more and more angry at how Jerry Lewis was mimicking the young singer.

So, the stage manager notices Theodore's reaction to Jerry Lewis and just as Theodore is being introduced to go on, the stage manager says, "Hey, give Jerry everything you've got!" So Theodore goes out and starts railing on Jerry Lewis: "How dare you insult this young man who pours his heart out? How dare you?" And the audience starts booing Theodore, and Jerry Lewis says, "See? They love me." To which Theodore replies, "Yes, it's the pigs applauding the pig!"

So, that's another story that could be a nice DVD feature.

Absolutely. Also, Theodore tells how Merv Griffin gave him the moniker "Brother." He was known only as "Theodore" up until meeting Merv Griffin. That's another reason I wanted to interview Merv Griffin, to hear his version of how that came to be.

Overall are you pleased with the documentary?

Yeah, I am. Of course, every now and then I feel like a few things need to be tweaked technically. But overall, I'm pretty pleased with how it came out and how people are receiving it, especially the fans. And his friends, colleagues, and his family.

I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity and to have completed what I set out to do. As a lot of your readers may know, it's very difficult making a labor-of-love documentary, and it takes a tremendous amount of tenacity. Films such as this one rarely recoup their costs, but I'm hoping perhaps some work will come from it. Besides, meeting Theodore as well as everyone else connected with the film has been incredibly rewarding for me. So, I don't discount that at all.

What are some other documentaries you've done?

I produced and directed one about a hundred-year football rivalry, which was an unlikely topic for me. Not being a fan of either school, I was curious to take the challenge. It became about the relationships between the players and the coaches, rather than about the winning and losing history. The experience actually was very instrumental in laying the groundwork for me to be able to do *To My Great Chagrin*.

When did you begin the Theodore project?

It was in January of 2001 when I met him. And then he died in April of 2001.

Are you going to make a separate website for the film at all?

We have a couple of pages devoted to it on our Spontaneous Productions website. And there's some information about the DVD as well as some other recorded materials of Theodore's.

What audience do you hope to reach with this documentary?

I would like to definitely reach all the fans, because already many of them have found out about the film just by doing a Google search. Those that have contacted me are so nice and are excited that a film exists about Theodore. Another testament to him, which is so refreshing.

And then, I'd also like to reach a younger audience. I showed the film to students at a high school—Governor's School for the Arts. I was curious to see if it would be entertaining and engaging to people who have never heard of Theodore. And they loved it. They wanted to know more about him. I think they felt here's this elderly guy expressing what they're feeling right now. Questioning authority. Pondering sex and death. So, they definitely connected with Theodore. It reminded me of Len Belzer's comment about Theodore being an existential humorist, that his material and performance are timeless. And that's so true.



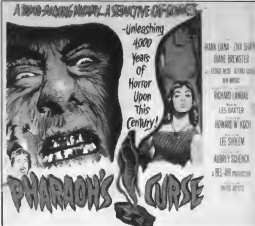
UNEARTHING THE PHAROAH'S CURSE

by John G. Stephens
As Told to Tom Weaver

Like the Egyptian cliff tomb where its story takes place, the Aubrey Schenck-Howard W. Koch production *Pharaoh's Curse* (1957) has also been buried by the sands of time, with TV airings infrequent and a home video release non-existent. Set in the Valley of the Kings at the turn of the 20th century, the chiller finds members of an Anglo-American archaeological expedition and several British soldiers stalked through the torch-lit corridors and secret chambers by a blood drinking, corpse-like figure, the reincarnation of the ancient king whose burial place has been invaded. Eerie and more effective than the better-known Schenck-Koch horrors (*The Black Sleep*, *Voodoo Island*, *Frankenstein* 1970), it might in its time have been the most atmospheric movie of this type since Boris Karloff's Imhotep in *The Mummy* (1932).

John G. Stephens, who cast *Pharaoh's Curse* and other Schenck-Koch flicks, soon went on to bigger and better projects, and remembered many of the highlights (and "lowlights") of his long career with great humor in his autobiography *From My Three Sons to Major Dad: My Life as a TV Producer* (Scarecrow Press, 2004).

Tom Weaver



John G. Stephens speaks with Tom Weaver

I never wanted to get into the movie business. I majored in poli-sci [political science] in college, and never intended to work in the movies. But when the opportunity came along, and the salary was good, I did get into it. My father William Stephens produced the *Dr. Christian* movies [between 1939 and 1941], plus a number of other B-movies, a lot of six-day wonders, ones you never heard of, like *Thunder in the Pines* [1948] and *Jungle Goddess* [1948]. He also ran a studio: It originally was Eagle-Lion, and when a couple fellows called Bernie Tabakin and Eliot Hyman bought it, my father and his partner Eddie Conne ran it. The name of the place was changed from Eagle-Lion to American National. Ziv was there, Hal Bartlett was there, Schenck-Koch were there, a whole bunch of shows were done out of there.

Schenck-Koch knew about me and asked me to work for them, and I did a number of their shows. We did two great films, one called *Shield for Murder* [1954] with Edmond O'Brien, a sensational movie, and then we did a tremendous movie called *Big House, U.S.A.* [1955] with Brod Crawford, Ralph Meeker, Charlie Bronson and Lon Chaney. I worked with a lot of gentlemen who were "alcoholically challenged" in those days but Lon Chaney was the only person that I ever had to load onto an airplane who was drunk at six in the morning. He was drunk the whole time! He was a very, very sweet man. What happened to him, happened to a lot of other actors. When he was starting in, he was so great in *Of Mice and Men* [1939]—he was the best Lennie there ever was. Then, I think, being the son of Chaney Sr. hurt him a lot, he could never live up to his father. All of a sudden he got involved in all these horror movies, and he just sunk and sunk and sunk. And drank and drank and drank. But he was a nice, sweet man. There were so many alcoholics in *Big House*. . . . When we walked into the Canon City Prison in Colorado, believe me, the prisoners were scared [laughs]! It was a tough bunch with Brod Crawford, the nicest drunk in the world, Bill Talman who was a mean drunk, Ralph Meeker, who had just lost the starring part in the movie version of *Picnic* after doing it on Broadway and wasn't in a good mood, and all the rest.

When you worked for Schenck-Koch, you had to go on location, work as an extra, work as a stunt driver, whatever. There's no way you ever worked for Schenck-Koch that you didn't have something to do. In *Shield for Murder*, they wanted a bunch of extras to crowd around after there was a murder, and you had to say the usual line, "Hubba hubba hubba hubba"—you couldn't use dialogue. Then once you were established in the master shot, you had to stay around 'til sometimes three or four in the morning. For no extra money, of course! But it was fun. [TW. Needless to say, all of this isn't in the line of duty for the average casting guy.] Oh, no, no. Just Schenck-Koch casting guys [laughs]. The casting of the Schenck-Koch pictures took place at American National, in Aubrey Schenck's office. Seldom would the director sit in, because it was entirely up to Howard and Aubrey. Mark Dana [starring as a British army officer] was the only person on *Pharaoh's Curse* that I didn't cast: normally what [Schenck and Koch] would do was have one or two people that they had pre-cast. I cast the rest of that show from top to bottom. I loved Terence deMarney [playing one of Dana's troopers], who was a tremendous actor, and George Neise [playing the caddish head of the expedition] I worked with a lot. The director Lee Sholem held him down, I must say, 'cause George had a tendency to go over the top quite a bit [laughs]. Ben Wright was a sensational actor and I worked with him a lot too.

Also in that movie was Ziva Rodann [as the enigmatic Simira, ostensibly a native girl but actually a cat goddess]. Originally her name was Ziva Shapiro, Aubrey and Howard changed it to Ziva Shapir, and she changed it later to Ziva Rodann. She was not the most pleasant person to work with, but she was very good in the picture, you really believed her in that part. She had served in the Israeli army; all the Jewish girls in Israel at that time had to serve in the Israeli army. She had a tough attitude, but probably all the girls that went through what she did [army life] had a tough attitude. She was always feeling that she was being put-upon, and she pretty much stayed to herself. We also had in that movie a guy who claimed he was a prince [Alvaro Guillot, who plays the boyish Egyptian guide who transforms into the monster]. An agent brought him in and said he was a prince in Egypt, and Aubrey and Howard looked at me as if

Here's how Howard did his location work: He would never ever land at an airport and then have to bus the crew 30 miles, or whatever, to the place where we'd be shooting. He would pick out exactly where the locations would be, as close to where the plane could land as possible. We'd land, and within 30 minutes we'd be filming. No one else had ever done that before. Instead of getting one and a half pages on the location the first day, we'd get about six or seven. He was just brilliant. We got the *Pharaoh's Curse* cast members into their costumes and makeup at the lobby of Burbank Airport, and then they got on the plane and sweat [laughs]. We took off from Burbank and we landed in Death Valley and we went right to work. On location with a Schenck-Koch picture, usually we'd stay in a dinky hotel. I never stayed in a nice place, ever, when I was on locations with Schenck-Koch, never! The place where we stayed on *Pharaoh's Curse* kinda looked like an old Campgrounds of America campground. That was not the only time we stayed in shacks on a Schenck-Koch location. But that's what we expected. No one was shocked when we got there, they weren't expecting to stay at the Hilton.

All of the locations were Death Valley. We did the trek shots in the daytime, and the night stuff was mostly night-for-night, which was not done that often in those days. When we were on location, the cave and tomb sets were being built on the soundstages at American National. The production on that, for what it cost, was just unbelievable. Those sets were impressive, they actually looked like a cave chamber and a tomb.

After we did the picture, Aubrey Schenck called me into the office on a Friday, about 11 o'clock, and said, "*Pharaoh's Curse*, boy, we're really happy with it, it's great. We're previewing it tonight, and you're gonna be there." I said, "Oh? Okay." Then he said the preview would be at the Fox Beverly Theater. I said, "What??"—I thought it was a joke! In Beverly Hills? All those high school kids? Aubrey said, "Here's what I want you to do: You know a lot of girls. I want you to bring four girls, and we'll pay their way into the theater. Remember *The Uninvited* [1944]? The way, when the door slammed shut, everybody [in the audience] screamed? In the spot in *Pharaoh's Curse* where we first show the mummy, I want all four girls to scream on cue. It'll get the whole audience in hysteria. It'll really 'make' this movie. You got that?" I said [hesitantly], "... Yeah."

I went and I called about 30 girls, and found this one girl I knew from college, Maxine Griffith, who agreed to come, and said she'd get three girlfriends to come with her. I met them outside the Fox Beverly Theater and showed them the script, explaining when they had to scream. Then I gave them the money for their tickets. They were all happy and went in and got seated and all that. I didn't sit with them.

I forget what picture was showing that night at the theater, but they were also advertising a MAJOR STUDIO PREVIEW, and so the place was crowded and the people were expecting to see a movie with Clark Gable or Lana Turner or somebody like that. Our movie, the "major studio preview," comes on, it says on the screen BEL-AIR PRODUCTIONS... and the audience starts to hoot. And they continue to hoot at everything as the movie played. You could barely hear the movie, they were laughing so much and making so much fun of everything. Then the laughter died down for a few minutes, and I thought to myself, "Thank goodness..."

Now came the part where the mummy was about to show himself. The audience was quiet, the mummy appeared and the girls screamed—and the audience started to laugh hysterically! By the time the movie was over, there couldn't have been more than 20 people left in that theater, and that includes the crew, the girls and myself. As I was leaving, Aubrey Schenck got a hold of me and he chewed me out: "Why didn't you stop them? You saw how the audience was reacting, you shoulda stopped those girls, you shoulda stopped them! That's your job, you shoulda stopped them!" "Yes, you're right, Aubrey, you're right..." According to Aubrey, the girls "ruined" the whole movie! That was quite a moment. I have a lot of stories about Schenck-Koch, but that was one of my favorites. I always will remember what happened at the theater that night even more so than the movie [laughs].

When I got the tape of *Pharaoh's Curse* in the mail from you, I thought, "Oh my gosh, I don't wanna see this again, I was embarrassed by that movie..." But I watched it and I actually liked it. For what it was, it was good. We had very good production in that; Howard Koch was absolutely a genius. And the acting was tremendous, I was really impressed by the acting. It was a good movie. I couldn't believe it!

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Return to the FORBIDDEN ZONE

By Greg Goodsell

Audiences who stumble into the indescribable musical fantasy the *Forbidden Zone* (1980)—whether from a late night cable TV showing, a bootlegged VHS tape, or repertory theater screening—are instantly whisked away to a paper-and-glue netherworld called the Sixth Dimension. In the film's overheated 73 minutes, a veritable parade of ethnic stereotypes, topless princesses, dancing frogs and chorus girls fly by, leaving the viewer befuddled, shocked and enchanted.

The film *Forbidden Zone* grew as an extension of the cabaret act The Mystic Knights of the Oingo Boingo, which later would become the new wave rock group Oingo Boingo, fronted by current film composer wunderkind Danny Elfman. It was through the vision and hard work of Danny's older brother, Richard Elfman, that *Forbidden Zone* came into existence. Though bizarre and delightful, *Forbidden Zone* is merely like most other musicals, insists Richard Elfman—an excuse for a dozen hot song-and-dance numbers.

And like the majority of musicals, *Forbidden Zone*'s plot is a vaporous one, best left to the inebriated film fan to decipher. To wit: Slumlord Huckleberry P. Jones (Gene Cunningham, acting in minstrel blackface under the name Ugh-Fudge Bwana) is rutting around in one of his bungalows in Venice, California looking for heroin to unload. He stumbles through a basement portal into the Sixth Dimension, presided over by midget King Fausto (Hervé Villechaize) and insane Queen Doris (Susan Tyrrell). Jones manages to escape—and according to one of many silent movie inter-titles—finds and sells the heroin and then rents the property to the dysfunctional Hercules family. Composed of Swedish Pa (Cunningham again), Ma (Virginia Rose), Flash (Phil Gordon II), Jewish wrestler Gramps (Hyman Diamond) and daughter Susan B. "Frenchy" Hercules (Elfman's then-wife Marie Pascale-Elfman), the basement has already swallowed up neighborhood kid Rene Henderson (Matthew Bright, acting under the name Toshiko Boloney), the transvestite "sister" of abused child Squeezit (Bright again).

While colorful, the Hercules family was based on real-life characters. Elfman says he knew at the time. "Among the things that I wished to portray in *Forbidden Zone*, besides simply a filmed version of an entertaining stage musical, was an Absurdist satire on contemporary amorality and society's utter lack of ethical responsibility. My next door neighbors at the time were a poor white trash family—the drunken father would scream at the mother, who yelled and slapped the teenage piggy slut-daughter, who beat her younger brother, who threw shit at the dog," Elfman says.

Ma and Pa sternly warn Frenchy against venturing into the basement while stoking her curiosity. "How cure-ye-us!" Frenchy exclaims in her exaggerated Gaelic accent. Attending school with Gramps, Frenchy jumps through the window when a disagreement over a gambling debt between black students (played by adults in Blaxploitation pimp attire) erupts into gunfire. Returning home, Frenchy disobeys her parents' edict and enters the basement, where—in just one of a series of remarkable animated scenes courtesy of John Muto—she is swallowed whole and sent through gigantic intestines and a Rube Goldberg device before being spat out of a cartoon anus to land on fecal pillows. "Hot damn! The Sixth Dimension! Is that a rumba I hear?" she exclaims. Lured to a boxing ring surrounded by gigantic heads, Frenchy discovers two Dadaist boxers (performance art group the Kipper Kids), dancing frog manservant BustRod (Jan Stuart Schwartz) and a rather rotund young man in Mickey Mouse ears singing the 40's Latin classic, "Bim Bam Boom." In a hilarious scene designed to send all viewers on lysergic chemicals screaming from the room, lips mouthing the nonsensical lyrics in Spanish are superimposed over the kid's face.

A question foremost in the minds of many of the film's fans was where Elfman discovered this actor. Elfman has long forgotten the young man's name. "He was a neighborhood kid in Venice, California. Very, very shy. He froze up in front of the camera, so I had to superimpose Squeezit (Matthew Bright) Henderson's lips over his." The scene is still used by Elfman as a warning to actors who fail to memorize their lines.

The dance is rudely interrupted by the Kingdom's topless princess (Gisela Lindley), who brings Frenchy before her parents King Fausto (Villechaize) and Queen Doris (Tyrrell). Fausto is instantly smitten with the gamine, much to the Queen's dismay. "She is French, and therefore of the Master Race!" Fausto later rationalizes. The queen consigns Frenchy to the dungeon, and between numerous romantic peccadilloes, a power struggle for the Sixth Dimension ensues.



Joe Spinell shows a little love in the *Forbidden Zone*.

Frenchy's friends and family all enter the Sixth Dimension in an attempt to rescue her, the former queen (Warhol Superstar Viva) is found rotting in a cell; there's a smoking hot Cab Calloway number starring Danny Elfman as Satan and a coup d'état. It's all over before the audience has a chance to catch its breath, and no one can resist jumping back on the rollercoaster for yet another viewing. Where did all this wonderful nonsense begin? According to Elfman, it all began in Southern California, with a delour courtesy of Paris, France.

Forbidden Zone is a crazy quilt of ideas and visuals as one can cite the Fleischer Bros., underground comics, vaudeville, Yiddish theatre, and, silent films. Elfman adds, "Late 19th Century French Absurdist Theater, maybe French theater in general. And the Ascended Masters, of course!" This writer, a native of the Golden State, points out to Elfman that a lot of Southern Californian malaise seems to have been a major inspiration as well. I ask if his upbringing was a traumatic one. "Mine wasn't too traumatic," he replies. "Except for getting

beaten and bloodied by anti-Semitic poor-white-trash kids and taunted and ridiculed for being a Jew through much of my early youth. And maybe the time, a few years later, when Dorsey High won a football game at Manuel Arts High here in South Central L.A. when an angry black mob pulled me and a few white friends out of the broken car windows and stomped us. Luckily, the police arrived . . . but other than that and several dozen other incidents—nothing too traumatic, Danny, a few years my junior, seemed to get off easier in terms of harassment.”

The creative Richard and Danny fled California for the higher artistic climes to be found in Paris, France in the seventies. There, the brothers joined the theatre group The Grand Magic Circus under the hand of James Savary, who would later become the director of the French National Theatre. It was also the Elfmans' good fortune to work with Peter Brooke of the Royal Shakespeare Company during this especially fecund period. After studying a wide array of music, theatre and stagecraft, Danny and Richard returned to the United States to form the avant-garde musical combo The Mystic Knights of the Oingo Boingo.

Unlike other musical acts of the day, The Mystic Knights of the Oingo Boingo eschewed rock and roll to concentrate on such Harlem Renaissance hipster artists as Cab Calloway and Josephine Baker. Retro long before the coining of the term, the band would dress in wild costumes and engage in bizarre bits of cabaret.

It was during the late seventies that Richard decided to transpose the Mystic Knights' stage show to film, and the result was the hour-long, 16mm, lost-to-the ages *The Hercules Family*, which was never completed. Friends encouraged Richard to make the leap to 35mm to capitalize on the Midnight Movie crowd audience, which was then lining up at multiplexes for such fare as *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) and *Pink Flamingos* (1972).

Production money was raised by “buying and refurbishing old houses, credit cards and help from Ugh-Fudge Bwana and producer Carl Borack,” says Elfmans. Shooting *Forbidden Zone* proceeded off and on over a two year period. Elfmans says that the cast was recruited from friends and acquaintances. “Matthew Bright (Toshiro Boonery) was a classmate of my brother Danny. Matthew's roommate at the time was Hervé Hervé's ex-girlfriend was Susan (Tyrell). Matthew also was friends with Joe Spinell. Pia was in the Mystic Knights with me. The Princess did a bit in our stage show.” Many other faces were literally plucked from the street, as in one scene where a Greek chorus of drunks is seen chuckling at the action. “The ‘intoxicated gentlemen’ you refer to were sitting on the casting sidewalk that day on 4th and Alameda, awaiting some bottles of acting booze,” says Elfmans.

Villechaize and Tyrell, jealous lovers on film, were jealous ex-lovers in real life. “The two loved and admired each other profoundly. Yes, they had some tempestuous chemistry as a couple, but the love was always there.” Elfmans also shares that Viva, who portrays the glibulous ex-queen, had a contentious relationship with Tyrell, and that the catfight they engage in at the climax of the film was real.

Disaster struck when a lighting fixture fell and struck Matthew Bright on the head during filming. Elfmans says he will never forget the sight of Bright lying on a hospital emergency room gurney while dressed in full Rene drag and makeup. Ever the trouper, Bright returned the next day for shooting, albeit with a sprained neck.

Everyone pitched in and did double duty on the project. As soon as the cameras stopped rolling, Marie Pascale-Elfmans would relinquish her place in front of the camera in order to spend long nights painting the expressionistic sets. Hervé Villechaize, himself an accomplished artist, would lend his artistic expertise to the painted flats on the weekend. Many actors filled secondary roles. Among the most notable is Susan Tyrell's turn as Rene and Squeezit's barfly mom Mrs. Henderson. In a dark wig and long nose makeup, Tyrell berates and torments Squeezit (“Oh, Chicken Boy!”) and declares that her waterfront date for the evening is his long-lost father (Joe Spinell of *Maniac* [1980] infamy).

Shot years before advances in digital technology, many of the sped up sequences in *Forbidden Zone* were accomplished by painstakingly removing individual film frames and then reassembling them one at a time. While many props and costumes were on loan from the Mystic Knight's stage act, one bit of wardrobe—Mickey Mouse caps with distinctive round ears that one can buy at Walt Disney theme parks—is worn without apology by many characters throughout the film. Elfmans remembers that one insurance company refused *Forbidden Zone* coverage due to the caps, but the items, shorn of their distinctive corporate logos, flew under the radar of the usually litigation-happy multimedia conglomeration.



Once completed, *Forbidden Zone* had a hard time drawing an appreciative theatrical audience. Released when Midnight Movies had faded in popularity, the film “was condemned by the ‘politically correct’ when it came out, banned from PC campuses. Arson threats drove it from theaters.” Many accused Richard Elfmans of anti-Semitism for his inclusion of an elderly Yiddish money changer character, unaware that the actor was played by Elfmans' real-life grandfather.

This writer became familiar with *Forbidden Zone* through the odd late-night cable TV screening. “The original cable version was a low-res dupe of a rough cut that I had my lawyer pull off the air,” says Elfmans. The film was released briefly on VHS on the Video Gems label, where it quickly went out of print (but now fetches high prices on internet auction sites). “Most people saw bootlegs that I wasn't aware of. It was only a few years ago that Fantoma Films put out a decent DVD version, and now Legend Films has done this new amazing color job on the film.”

Elfmans says it was a longtime dream to have *Forbidden Zone* in color, hand-colored by Chinese craftsmen in the manner of silent films. The Legend Films DVD release has bright, stylized hues recalling hand-painted postcards of yesteryear. Asked if this expressionistic color scheme was intentional, Elfmans replies, “No, we choose a more ‘realistic’ looking route. The film is cartoony enough already in terms of art direction.”

In the years following the original release of *Forbidden Zone*, many cast and crew members have gone on to many other projects. Danny Elfmans would later score countless motion pictures, in particular the films of director Tim Burton. Matthew Bright would later direct *Freeway* (1996) and *Freeway II: Confessions of a Trickbaby* (1999), and currently is working on other film projects. Richard Elfmans would go on to direct *Shrunken Heads* (1994), and *Modern Vampires* (1998), as well as serve as editor-in-chief of the glossy entertainment periodical *Buzz*. Kipper Kid Martin von Haseberg would later marry comedienne Bette Midler, leading the Divine Miss M to quip to her titling fans during her stage show, “I married a German. Every night, I dress up as Poland, and he invades me!”

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Art by
Dan
Piegel
2008

Several *Forbidden Zone* cast members have since passed away. Actor Joe Spinell was found dead in his Queens apartment in 1989. Hervé Villechaize, despondent by the dwindling acting jobs offered him after his long run as Tattoo ("Da planet Da planet") on TV's *Fantasy Island*, would take his own life with a self-inflicted gunshot wound in 1993. Susan Tyrrell would have a brush with death in 2000 when she became stricken with the rare blood disease essential thrombocythemia, necessitating the amputation of both legs below the knee in order to save her life. Confined to a wheelchair, Tyrrell still takes the occasional acting role, but now concentrates on her artwork. At a packed-to-the-rafters screening of the new colorized version of *Forbidden Zone* at the American Cinematheque in Hollywood, Tyrrell was greeted with thunderous applause as she took to the stage for a post-screening question and answer panel.

I asked Eitman which wild permutation *Forbidden Zone* will take next. "3-D. Then Holograms in your living room. And finally, hallucinations inside your head." One last question for Eitman: With every cult film favorite, there are always obsessed fans. What was the most remarkable fan adulation that he has seen as a result of *Forbidden Zone*? "Maybe the time those three 19-year-old Playboy triplets, all dressed as the topless Princess, tried to sneak into my bed one night when I was particularly drunk and single. They did lewd things and tried to provoke me—but of course I told them that such behavior was unchaste, and I ran straight away to the Rabbi for guidance. I told the Rabbi what had occurred. He said I was full of it and didn't believe I had resisted—only Abraham or Moses were capable of something like that. I offered my fingers for him to sniff, to prove my innocence. The Rabbi left the room . . . and returned dressed like Susan Tyrrell in 'The Queen's Revenge.' He lashed me with whips and forced me to rectify 20 Hail Marys."

Fans can observe other projects by the mad genius by logging on to www.richardelfman.com.



John Muto's bizarre animation only adds to the *Forbidden Zone*'s weirdness.



Danny the Devil.

Did you go to drive-ins at all when you were growing up?

Yes, I did. I actually saw *Dawn of the Dead* and *Motel Over Massacre* on a double-bill at the Sunrise Drive-in in Long Island. I also recall seeing *Freaks* and *Night of the Living Dead* too. All of those films were responsible for shaping my interest in the genre.

Were you aware of and a fan of other genres besides horror?

Definitely. I was well-rounded because different members of my family liked different things. Every Sunday I loved to watch Abbott and Costello movies. And I loved the Marx Brothers, too. I gravitated towards them on TV on my own. I also loved the TV-movies, like *Sybil* with Sally Field and *Death Screams* which was inspired by the Kitty Genovese murder. I mean, those movies really impacted me when I was young.

During your formative years, which directors did you admire?

George Romero really impressed me. His films back then had so much meat to them, when he was doing *Martin*, *Dawn of the Dead*, and *Knight Riders*. Add *Jack's Wife* to the list as well. Steven Spielberg's *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, that's one of the best adventure films of all time. It harkened back to the serials of the 30's, but it also was a product of the more technologically polished 80's.

When did you get the idea to begin to make films?

I started in 1978 when I was 13, but I started with painting. I was encouraged by a wonderful art teacher, and I painted images that I saw in Denis Gifford's horror book. I was interested in this for about two or three years. Then a friend introduced me to Super 8mm film, and I made a short film about *Dracula*. It was a 20-minute Super-8 film that I made. Even in the early 80's I still shot in silent Super 8mm. My family was deeply involved in social work then, and I was hired to make films for a phobia clinic when I was in high school. They needed a camera that had the subjective eye that would induce phobias in people. I didn't get exposed to 16mm until I went to the New York Institute of Technology in Westbury, NY. When I got out of college, the only film positions available were unpaid internships. So, I knew that making a movie on 16mm was out of the question, and I hated the way that standard VHS video looked.



Standard video is awful. I worked with it in the late 80's and early 90's. I wish that we had had digital video at the time!

I know! I went to a lot of photography stores and looked for all the Super 8mm film that I could find, and at the time the stores were looking to get rid of their overstock because they didn't want to carry Super 8mm anymore. So, I got real aggressive and bought up the overstock film that had passed its expiration date and got it very cheap.

Let's talk about *The Bloody Ape*. When did you film this?

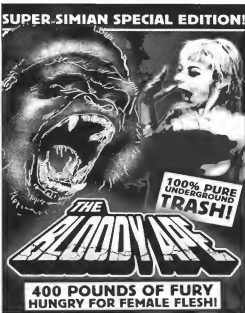
Well, the scene of the girl being attacked in the shower was shot as early as 1991, and that was done on 16mm as a trailer to get financing for the film.

That's interesting. Dennis Hopper did the same thing in the late 60's shooting footage at Mardi Gras on 16mm to get financing for *Easy Rider*. Ultimately, they used that footage in the film, which was shot on 35mm.

Right. That's what we were trying to do. The bulk of it was shot in the summer and fall of 1992 and into 1993.

Who were the people cast in the film?

The film was cast with friends of mine and co-workers. Paul Richichi played Lampini, and he dates back to the 60's, he was in Vietnam. He was stationed in the Philippines, so he was away from the action, so afterwards he was interested in the arts, etc. I also used him in my college stuff. Larry Kester actually worked at the gas station that is featured in the film, the one with the \$1.55 gas from a million years ago (laughs). He's a mechanic, and we shot those scenes during the weekend. Arlene Hansen plays Ginger and had made a few Long Island horror films, too. Topless dancers played the girls who were naked and killed or assaulted by the ape. George Reis played the cop and he was my partner at the time. He's now the creator of the DVD Drive-in website. He was my co-editor at the time on the fanzine that we did called *The Exploitation Journal*. He was originally going to play the ape, but the casting got shifted around because other people were unreliable.



Your most recent film is *Blitzkrieg: Escape From Stalag 69* which, along with *The Bloody Ape*, is now on DVD.

Yes, in fact, *The Bloody Ape* DVD has a few of my short films on it, like *One Grave Too Many* and *Thanksgiving Day*.

The film harkens back to the Nazi exploitation films of thirty years ago. What was the genesis for this project?

Well, *The Bloody Ape* ends with a trailer for *Schindler's Lust*, a parody of *Schindler's List*, that we did as an in-joke trailer and was never intended as a full-length feature. But, I lost interest and kind of buried the idea of it. Then, some years later, an ex co-worker of mine got in touch with me and offered to build all the props and even front-up some money if I were to do this type of film. But, he was only willing to do all of this if I went back to this Nazi-type project. So, I wrote the first draft of a script, then began casting the film, and realized that my co-worker wasn't coming through for me the way I would have liked, so I had to move ahead with the film without him since I cast the film already. He has passed away since, but I have thanked him in the film because he really pushed me to make the film. But, this was never originally intended to be my next film. But, what really helped was having Keith Maturro, my costume designer, on the film. He's an expert on World War II, so he knows the uniforms and is very knowledgeable about these things.



How long was the production?

Production began in November 2005 and lasted until about July 2007. Many things happened during this time because we had to shoot at night, and also did it on weekends. We shot it on digital video. We began shooting it on both 24p digital video and black and white reversal 16mm film. High definition was not the way to go because it is too clean, and we wanted it to have some grain to it to look like film. So, we did it 24p digital video. Jim Krusch, our cameraman, had his own light set, so he knew the type of look I wanted, and he shot the film. He also did the on-the-set digital and 35mm set

shots, and that's a lot of work for one person. So, watching the dailies of the first day I knew that digital was the way to go, over 16mm, because the expense was so much less for video. We shot it on a Panasonic DVX100A camera. I was very pleased with the results.

Were you doing this as a throwback to the *Ilsa* films and *Last Orgy of the Third Reich*?

Actually the propaganda films of the 1940's made by the Americans were the biggest influence on me. Also, *Stalag 17*, of course, and Lina Wertmüller's *Seven Beauties*. Also, Robert Stevenson's *Joan of Paris* from 1942. I was more interested in the prisoner of war camp idea of soldiers against each other than exploring the concentration camp aspect of the war. Plus, we bent all the rules to make for more interesting characters. Technically, a prisoner of war camp would not have had mixed Russians, Americans and British, and they clearly would not have had men and women mixed together.

Were did you find Tatyana Kot, the lead actress who runs through the woods sporting only army boots and a machine gun?

Tatyana Kot is from Russia, and she applied to my casting sessions. I am so thankful that she did. She was so humble and I was captivated by her. I took a chance on her, and she looked great for the film!

What do you hope to make in the future?

Well, I don't want to sandwich myself into a particular style. I'd like to be like Robert Wise, be really good in different types of genres, you know? Busy, busy!



- 1) When all else fails, the eye gouge does the trick.
- 2) "Please God, kill me before Troma gets this footage."
- 3) Grindmeisters on Parade! Keith Crocker and 42nd Street Pete in NYC at the Pioneer Theatre's *Blitzkrieg* premiere.



REX & DRUGS & ROCK N ROLL

A preview of the new independent film *REX*

By Stephen Hart

Violence. Drugs. A little sex. Plot twists. And the kind of on-screen intensity between intriguing characters that keeps an audience riveted. It's the kind of winning combination filmmakers strive to pull off, and it's the kind of celluloid chemistry that actor Duane Whitaker (Maynard, the pawn-shop owner who liked to catch patrons in his web with his buddy Zed in the 1994 classic *Pulp Fiction*) knows something about. And Whitaker recognizes that same twisted movie DNA in his latest film, *Rex*, produced by Sam Borowski and written and directed by Christopher L. Miller. "In both cases (*Rex* and *Pulp Fiction*), it's not just violence for the sake of violence," said Whitaker, who also starred in *Feast*, the Project Greenlight production. "There is a message, and you don't even have to look closely at either film to see it. They both are very kick ass movies!" *Rex* actress Robin Phipps, who plays police officer Dee, added, "Both are edgy films with lots of violence but strong messages, each have fast-paced editing and important subplots. They are fascinating but disturbing."



Robin Phipps (Dee) and Dan Roebuck (Sheriff Bobby) take a moment to pose on the set of *Rex*.



It's not just those associated with *Rex* echoing the link. The *Staten Island Advance* newspaper described the Borowski/Miller collaboration as a "Tarantino-esque flick" during its coverage of the recent SINY Film Festival, in which *Rex* won the coveted Audience Choice Award. "*Pulp Fiction* is a movie that influenced a whole generation of filmmakers. So to receive that kind of comparison is tremendous praise," said Phipps. "It's humbling."

Rex is set in a rural Georgia town, complete with cows and silos and barnyard dances—where a young man named Chase (Alan Ritchson, who played Chase in the film's opening flashback sequence that the sheriff killed Chase's dad (Zen Gesner) because of his unrequited love for Canerday's Leanne character. And now, he's carried that grudge over to Chase. As if the pressures of trying to save the farm and avoiding a vindictive sheriff aren't bad enough, there's Chase's sexy yet nagging girlfriend Tina (Anne W. Griffin) who seems to flirt any chance she can, especially with the town's lead thug (played with delicious sleaze by Russ Comegys). And all the while, he uses childhood friend Dee (Phipps) as his sounding board, never realizing she loves him.

Local businessman Marcus Cotter (Whitaker) sympathizes with Chase's plight, but he's also being manipulated by the devious and corrupt sheriff, who uses Cotter to further push Chase into a corner. With nowhere to go for the money, Chase finally succumbs to a friend's suggestion that he go to his basement and start manufacturing crystal meth—a real-life epidemic in some parts of our financially strapped country. Chase's decision sets off a dramatic chain of events, as the mafia—in the form of a hoodlum named Luca (Eric Rosenberg, in a literally in-your-face performance)—now becomes involved in his ever-complicated life. Without giving anything away, what ensues is emotional and vicious and yes, even funny at times—all right out of the Quentin Tarantino playbook.

While the movie—filmed on location in Georgia, including the actual town of Rex—can be seen as an homage, Rex clearly stands on its own, with its own identity. One created not only by Miller's snappy dialogue but by the cinematography of Mitchell D. Lipsiner, who beautifully frames the bleak surroundings, reflecting the hopelessness felt by many of the movie's characters. And the sharp editing of Steven James Creazzo, whose quick-cut sequences promote that on-the-edge-of-your-seat feeling, makes it hard to take your eyes off the screen, because you don't know what's going to happen next.

"When I watched Rex, I knew it was a winner," said Francis Leik, director of the Long Island Film Festival, who selected it as his event's opening-night movie (Aug. 27, 2008). "And I immediately thought of that same kind of style that *Pulp Fiction* imbued . . . the editing style, the use of music and the violent themes."

Speaking of music, the promising New York based group Emperor City Motorcade provides the snazzy soundtrack along with contributions from local singer Gwen Hughes, who can be seen in the movie. And the final song—Joe Walsh's *In The City*—is a tribute to another iconic (and violent) film, director Walter Hill's 1979 fight-filled *The Warriors*.

But it still can't escape comparisons to the works of Tarantino, not that any members of the Rex team want to run away from that—especially since *Pulp Fiction* recently topped *Entertainment Weekly's* list of "New Classics" of the past 25 years and because it's recognized as the highest-grossing independent movie of all time (almost \$213 million worldwide). "When I was supervising post-production, I wanted to embrace the style that fit Rex. Still, it is very flattering to get comparisons to a film like *Pulp Fiction* and even *Reservoir Dogs*," admitted Borowski, who praised the efforts of his entire cast—from the fiendish and funny Roebuck to Phipps, who he plans to work with again on his next project, *Nigel Read*.

Borowski spoke about his upcoming film: "*Nigel Read* is completely different . . . it has more in common with *Iron Man* or a James Bond film, combining campy humor with action. And I believe it will be a great vehicle for Robin Phipps, whose range is as great as anyone I have ever worked with before—and I have worked with some Oscar winners. I am truly looking forward to working with her again. I believe she'll be the next break-through actress in Hollywood."



1) Producer Sam Borowski offers a lift to actress Robin Phipps (Dee), while actor Duane Whitaker (Marcus Cotter) adds a helping hand at a closed cast screening of Rex earlier this year. 2) Robin, Dan, and Sam take a break. 3) A lobby card from *Pulp Fiction* featuring Duane Whitaker.



THE WILD WORLD OF TED V. MIKELS

Interview by Kevin Sean Michaels

"Ted V. Mikelis puts the 'exploit' in exploitation films. He's pretty amazing."—John Waters

Ted V. Mikelis is an American filmmaker and has been producing independent films for over half a century. Famous for his eccentric home life (he once lived with a harem in a castle with secret passageways), promotional gimmicks (he was known for having nurses and ambulances on hand to assist "scared-to-death" moviegoers), and creating *The Astro-Zombies*, one of the first slasher films, Mikelis is now considered a pioneering master of low-budget movie making. Mikelis' film *The Doll Squad* not only inspired the television series *Charlie's Angels*, but many years later was cited by Quentin Tarantino as one of the many influences for *Kill Bill*. Mikelis is the subject of a new biography called, *Film Alchemy: The Independent Cinema of Ted V. Mikelis* as well as my new documentary, *The Wild World of Ted V. Mikelis*.

SCREEN: Why was the timing right for a documentary on yourself?

TED: I would never have guessed it would come into being. I guess I figured that I would be making movies for about a hundred years, but time has a way of running out on people. A documentary on myself is a tribute to sixty years of hard work. Developing my first roll of black & white 16mm film in my bathtub is one of my first memories. The chemicals leaked out because there was a hole in the soldering of the developing tank and all the footage got ruined. When you develop film yourself you better have watertight containers (laughs). There were no laboratories of any sort in Bend, Oregon.

Were you looking for Hollywood attention?

I spent years trying to bring Hollywood to Bend. I took hundreds of photos of location shots, every cave and every waterfall, you name it, and brought them to Hollywood to show the production managers and I told them that they should come to Bend, Oregon to make movies. There was no immediate response, but within a short time, Disney came up and did the film *Tonka*, then there was *Oregon Passage*, *Qay of the Outlaw*, and many others. Then they began to shoot television series like *Have Gun, Will Travel*. I was like the ambassador for Bend, Oregon. I personally became acquainted with Kirk Douglas, Walter Matthau, Alan Hale, Jr., Burl Ives, Walter Abel, Iron Eyes Cody, Lloyd Gamell (who had a company that sold lights to me), and so many others. A number of them invited me afterward to visit them in Hollywood. I worked on most of the films as a horseman, stuntman, and as Indian extras. Before they filmed *Have Gun, Will Travel* in Bend, I worked on the Kirk Douglas movie *Indian Fighter*. That changed my life. I was hired as an archery expert and rode bareback on Indian ponies shooting flaming arrows.

Did you make any money as a result of these productions coming to town?

I made nothing. The Chief of Police and Chamber of Commerce collected all the money. I just thought it would be a good thing to bring movie-making to Bend, Oregon.



How primitive was your movie-making setup in Bend?

I had never seen a Moviola. Nobody had one. I was editing with a magnifying glass and cutting and taping things together. There was no recording equipment so I had to buy a 4-channel mixer and mix audio myself. There was no facility of any sort in Bend, Oregon. Nothing. I had to buy lights from the hardware store. We are talking about the early '50s....

The frustration made you want to get to Hollywood?

When all these productions came to Bend, I made a lot of friends both in the cast and the crews, and they introduced me to other folks. I soon realized that trying to duplicate Hollywood in Bend, Oregon was going to be impossible. Here's how I looked at it: If I could make a movie within ten years that could play in theaters, I could go to Hollywood with it. I was able to do that with my first 35mm production of *Strike Me Deadly*.

What happened when you came to Hollywood?

The first person I met was Wayne Rogers. He had seen *Strike Me Deadly* in a sneak preview and he

wanted to put me under contract and own every thing that I would do. I didn't agree to that, but I started getting a lot of work under other people's movies. I wanted to make enough money to finance my own movies. I had abilities in directing, cinematography, editing, makeup, lighting and so on which made me an all-around valuable guy. People making a movie that couldn't hire five different people hired me to do it all. I had more work than I could handle in the mid-60's.

How did you get into making genre films?

I didn't know what a genre film was. Wayne Rogers liked my story about *Astro-Zombies* but he wanted to make a spoof out of it. We didn't have enough money to do the movie as I wrote it so we made it as a spoof. To this day, I haven't seen any money from it. After that came *Girl in Gold Boots*, totally different because it was a musical drama. Then right after that was the *Corpse Grinders*, totally different again. *Corpse Grinders* was so popular and had fantastic grosses everywhere, so the trade papers began calling me "the king of horror." Different again was a supernatural movie called *Blood Orgy of The She-Devils* about witchcraft. *The Doll Squad* was more like *Strike Me Deadly*.

Why is it that other directors feel the need to make the same kinds of films over and over again?

I am an all-genre movie-maker. My motto is that I do anything that can be seen and heard and entertain people. It may be that other directors feel secure making the same movies or maybe they have gotten pigeon-holed along the way in their careers. I've always wanted to avoid the mold. I always wanted to be different. I don't want to do what everyone else is doing.

Did you know you were taking risks?

Well, when we did *Girl in Gold Boots*, everyone told me not to make a musical drama. But it did really well around the country. We played with the Beach Boys in Oklahoma and we were on stage with them. We had a lot of fun at drive-ins and at theaters. The risks always paid off because we were not playing by anyone else's rules. Some 47 years later, the movie is still popular and a best seller as noted on Yahoo. *Girl in Gold Boots* was on Mystery Science Theater and very popular.

What was so intriguing about life at the castle?

Well, a lot of men were totally fascinated by the fact that I could live with seven girls at a time. It was the fatherly instinct in me that if a girl wanted to change her life because of complications, providing that she wasn't strung-out on drugs or in a bad marriage she wanted to get out of, she could come and live with me and learn movie-making. The girls stayed because they wanted to, not because they had no other place to go. They lived by the rules that I set down, which were very simple—be responsible and help when needed and no sleeping around. If you are going to live with me while I shop and cook, we live like a family. You won't be doing. This is not a place where men can check out the girls and take them on dates. I said you are free to do that, but when you do pack your bags when you go out the door.

So they knew what they were getting into? No surprises?

None. No surprises. They totally agreed to my rules up front. It was totally clear. If you were an alcoholic or drug addict or want to mess around, you were not welcome. The ones that were already living there with me and living by these agreements, got to say whether a girl could stay or not. There were many times where I thought a girl would fit in and the other girls said no.

So they would vote on it, like *Survivor*?

Oh, yes. They would vote them in or vote them out. They came and had dinner with all the girls and myself and if the girls gave her a thumbs up, they could stay. If they gave a thumbs down, it was a no-no.

Did you ever have any bad incidents at the castle?

One girl that was very dear to me had a boyfriend that she no longer wanted anything to do with. He came to the castle about 1 a.m. with a pistol. I walked down the big hill and down the driveway having no idea what he was yelling about. He had the pistol and was waving it around. I told him that his ex-girlfriend didn't want to talk to him. He fired the pistol a bunch of times into the trees and he cried in frustration as he left. I calmed him down, but I could have been shot.

Did you carry a gun at that time, Ted?

No. I had pistols and rifles all over the place because I used to be a hunter, but I never used them for protection. I always did better by talking things out. I never thought that anything would happen and nothing bad ever did happen.

How did your new movie, *Demon Haunt*, come about?

Cory Ucker asked me if I ever took on outside scripts. He said he would love to have the chance to present something to me and I said go for it. He wrote a story about two sisters, one of whom is in a wheelchair, who buy a house with strange things going on. After reading it, I said that I thought it was not a bad story. I told him that I would give him top writing credit but I would change everything I wanted to do. He agreed and that's how we got started. We never intended to put in CGI, but as we went into pre-production, it made sense to use CGI instead of putting a little kid in makeup and having an adult made up like a ghost. Cory thought it was a privilege to have his name on a Ted V. Mikels movie.

So is this a horror film?

Not an absolute horror film. It's more supernatural like *The Exorcist* or *The Omen*. It has its scary moments.

When they showed the trailer at *Fangoria Weekend of Horrors* everybody seemed to love it.

Oh, yes. There has been great response from early viewings. This is another movie that is completely different than any of my others.

What's next?

We are about to do *Astro-Zombies M3 Cloned*. I want to do another *Astro-Zombies* movie because people seem to be so crazy about *Astro-Zombies*, so that's what's motivating me. The *Astro-Zombies* are so far from reality and so incredible that they are entertaining. I want to show something campy that is instantly recognized as something outside of reality.

How did you meet John Waters, who does the narration for *The Wild World of Ted V. Mikels*?

Every time Liz Renay would say that John was coming to town, she would say where she was going to have lunch with him. She would tell me to come by and she could say, "Oh, there's my producer-director Ted Mikels," and then I could meet him. I said no I don't meet people that way and I don't believe in that. I never have. I never used to go to The Brown Derby or The Beverly Hills Hotel in Hollywood and schmooze to make connections. But at another time in Hollywood, when we were doing a screening at a theater on Hollywood Boulevard where we were showing *Girl in Gold Boots* and *The Doll Squad*, Bill Carter mentioned that John Waters was doing a signing up the street at a bookstore and that we should say hello to him. John seemed to be very busy with the line of 30-40 people wanting his autograph on his book, but he took time out and shook my hand and said, "Oh, I've loved your movies for years." He was very warm and friendly. He said we should keep in touch and things like that. So here we are all these years later and he's the narrator of the documentary, *The Wild World of Ted V. Mikels*.

How do you think he did with the documentary?

I think he did an excellent job. I couldn't have imagined anyone doing any better. He had a nice tone and a pleasant voice. He sounded very gentle and genuine. I was very highly pleased with what he did.

What are your future plans?

I have a lot of scripts that I want to make into movies. I can't wait to get started on *Astro-Zombies M3 Cloned*.

Kevin Sean Michaels' (*Vampire: The Movie*) new documentary, *The Wild World of Ted V. Mikels* is playing in sneak previews around the country. For more information visit: www.thewildworldoftedvmikels.com.



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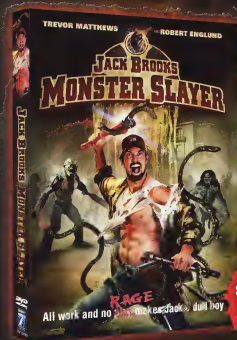
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THE DEAD MATTER THE MOVIE

Gothic Horror soundscape masters Midnight Syndicate bring their nightmarish visions to the big screen with the supernatural thriller *The Dead Matter* (coming 2009). Co-produced by Robert Kurtzman (from *Dusk Till Dawn*, KNB FX) and starring Andrew Divoff (*Lost*, *Wishmaster*), Jason Carter (*Babylon 5*, *Angel*), and Tom Savini (*Dawn of the Dead*, *Grindhouse*), *The Dead Matter* tells a story of a vampire relic with occult powers that falls into the hands of a grief-stricken young woman, who will do anything to contact her dead brother. The movie blends vampirism, the living dead, and mysticism—all drenched in the dark and shadowy world of Midnight Syndicate's music. It is classic horror with unique twists and turns in a story-driven film that promises to deliver for fans of the genre.

Screen spoke with Midnight Syndicate's Ed Douglas Jr., who dishes out the fresh dirt on all that *(Dead)* matters.

SCREEN: The plot synopsis for *The Dead Matter* sounds intriguing! Will we be able to catch it on the big screen, or is the film going direct to DVD?

ED DOUGLAS: We've actually just put the trailer for the film up on our website, so people can catch a first look of *The Dead Matter* online. (You can view the trailer at www.thedeadmatter.com.) We're working in conjunction with Hot Topic, so it's a thrill for us to have them on board. Hot Topic and Midnight Syndicate have put together the *Dead Matter* Flyaway contest, where you and a guest can win a flight to the premiere of the film, complete with hotel accommodations, limo service, and a meet and greet with Midnight Syndicate and the cast of *The Dead Matter*. We'll be giving away other prizes as well, such as a complete set of all ten Midnight Syndicate CDs, and limited-edition autographed movie props handcrafted by Robert Kurtzman's Creature Crew FX-artist Sean Rodgers. (Readers can go to *The Dead Matter* site for more information regarding the contest.) As for the film itself, we're in talks with several distributors, so we'll be hitting film festivals first, and then will concentrate on a DVD release.

Will Midnight Syndicate release a score for the film?

We will, but our newest disc is called *The Dead Matter: Cemetery Gates*, which is music inspired by the film. We wanted to have a new CD out for our fans to purchase for Halloween. Even though it's not the soundtrack for *The Dead Matter*, many of the tracks on *Cemetery Gates* will appear in the movie. We based some of the tracks on themes of the film—zombies, vampires, and we also have an Egyptian relic theme, which plays a big role musically in *Cemetery Gates*.

It can be said that Midnight Syndicate's music plays like a film soundtrack. Translating your sound visions to the big screen is a bold step.

My career started in film, although I've been in bands for as long as I can remember. All of my training in school had been in theater and film. After college, my first project in 1996 was a low budget version of *The Dead Matter*. And when I say low budget, I'm talking two thousand dollars! However, that money was enough to put the project on film, with the hopes that we could make a bigger version of the film in the future. And now, that time has come. I did the score for the early version of *The Dead Matter* as well, and concentrated on the music side of things after that project. In fact, the first Midnight Syndicate CD followed a year later in 1997. A year after that, I was doing multimedia concerts for Midnight Syndicate, where I took short films that I made and played them up on a screen while I played Midnight Syndicate music. It was a theatrical event—actors would run out from the movies onto the stage and reach into the audience. From there, we released *Born of the Night*, the disc that took off for us. The first Midnight Syndicate disc ranged from rock to rap to new age, but it was 1998's *Born into the Night* that really established our sound. It was all horror.



A creepy vision of the things to come in *The Dead Matter*.

Midnight Syndicate name grew, we were asked by several directors to score their films; and, when Robert Kurtzman moved back into my neck of the woods in Ohio and set up his company Precinct 13, he asked me to score his first movie called *The Rage*. It was a great to take on the project.

Did that opportunity spark your interest into resurrecting *The Dead Matter*?

I went to the set to see what kind of operation Robert had. And when I went there, it was amazing. He had a great crew working together, very friendly, very professional. When I left there that day, the idea was planted in my mind that I could make *The Dead Matter* happen. And I wouldn't have to leave Ohio to make the picture. After *The Rage* wrapped, I approached Bob with the idea, gave him the pitch and the script, and he liked it and got behind it. So, the film is a Midnight Syndicate/Precinct 13 project.

Is the film ready to be seen?

In August of 2007, we shot for four weeks and finished, then over the last year, we've been editing, and as of today, the visual effects and score are in progress. We should be done with it by the end of the year. We anticipate an early 2009 release.

Look for *The Dead Matter: Cemetery Gates* CD available now.



UNIVERSAL'S WOLFMAN HOWLS AGAIN!

When it came to finding his latest project, Benicio Del Toro didn't need to look very far for inspiration. Or rather, his manager didn't. All it took was a visit by Rick Yorn—who, like his client, is a lifelong fan of the classic Universal horror movies—to Del Toro's home and one look at a huge black-and-white poster of Lon Chaney Jr. as *The Wolf Man* that was hanging on the wall. "Rick looked at the poster and said, 'We're going to Universal tomorrow.' He took the ball and ran with it," recalled Del Toro, during a recent interview with *Screen Magazine*.

The fact that Universal didn't have plans to launch a remake of the 1941 original didn't stop Del Toro. Of course, it helps to have a little clout—in the form of an Academy Award win for 2000's *Traffic* and another Oscar nomination for 2003's *21 Grams*—on your side. "No, they were not working on it. But obviously, (Universal) knew

the material very well," said Del Toro. "We wanted to keep it classic, keep the legend alive . . . the silver bullet, all that stuff." *The Wolfman*, directed by Joe Johnston and starring Del Toro as the cursed Larry Talbot, along with a stellar supporting cast—Anthony Hopkins, Emily Blunt, Hugo Weaving and Geraldine Chaplin—has a release date of April 3, 2009.

Make no mistake, when it comes to old-school monsters, Del Toro is a fan, from his posters to his childhood collection of the old Castle Films' Super-8 reels. "I think one of the things is that those characters were always misunderstood. As a kid, I related to that," Del Toro stated. "I rooted for the monster and not the humans . . . especially in *Frankenstein*, *The Wolf Man*, *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* and *King Kong* which was from RKO. The monsters scared me, too," admitted Del Toro, before adding with a laugh, "but it didn't mean I wanted to light them on fire!"

FINDING HIS INNER MONSTER

Still, getting a 21st Century audience to relate is a challenge even for an actor as talented as Del Toro, who is coming off a Best Actor win at the Cannes Film Festival for his turn as Che Guevara in Steven Soderbergh's upcoming biopic now titled *Guerrilla*.

So, how does one prepare to play a werewolf? "Everyone is different. For me, I'd sit down and want to learn about the time period," said Del Toro, noting that this version of the tale is set in Victorian times and not modern day as many recent werewolf movies have done. "You do as much research as you can. And you pull from your imagination. I invented stuff. *Shark Week* can help! But aside from watching the Discovery Channel's annual staple to get in touch with his inner animal, the 41-year-old actor also read up on wolves and wolf behavior, and brought that research to his performance.

Del Toro even light-heartedly mused about the possible evolution of werewolves in a future society. "Maybe down the line, the sons of Talbot, eventually three to five generations down the line, become like Chewbacca . . . where maybe you can train them," he said. "Train them to go get you a soda or get the newspaper."

According to Shelly Johnson, the film's cinematographer, the chance to see how Del Toro would portray the tormented Talbot is what drew him to the project—along with the opportunity to work again with Johnston, with past collaborations including *Jurassic Park III* and *Hidalgo*. "I hadn't

seen (the 1941 original) in a while, so I watched it before we started shooting. The thing that got me about the first movie was how successful it was in showing the pain and suffering of the character," said Johnson. "It communicates the torture the character goes through. That's what attracted me to the project, seeing what Benicio Del Toro could do with a role like that. Benicio really surprised me with his performance. I didn't expect what he did. When he was Larry Talbot, he was that tortured man. But when

Benicio became the Wolfman, he became a wild, unpredictable, scary animal. He was a mad, crazy animal and there was no way to predict what he would do. It was very successful, a great way to play it. As the Wolfman character, he's very scary . . . he's going to scare a lot of people in the audience."

Del Toro, however, doesn't see Larry Talbot as a tortured soul. "He's flawed," Del Toro said. "He has his own demons. He's been rejected . . . rejected by his father. To me, he looked cocky more than anything. Then, he gets infected with a disease, and it goes from there."

CHANGES IN PRODUCTION

The project has had its share of hairy moments since Del Toro first signed on in early 2006, most notably a change in director from Mark Romanek (*One Hour Photo*) to veteran sci-fi/fantasy craftsman Johnston—who served as art director for visual effects on *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* before taking the directorial helm on movies such as *The Rocketeer*, *Jurassic Park III*, and *Jurassic Park IV*. "It helped a lot that we knew each other beforehand, since we were both brought on quite late. Joe came on three weeks before filming, and I came on two weeks before shooting," said Johnson. "Even though we didn't have the usual 12 weeks to prepare, we wanted to make sure we didn't fall back on conventional styles. We still wanted to give the audiences something different."

"Joe's great," said Del Toro of Johnston. "He came in at the last minute. The ship was already going and no one was going to grab the helm. But Joe stepped up and things went pretty smoothly. He did a really good job. He brought a good feeling to the film. He's great with making suggestions and taking suggestions from actors."

David Self (*Road to Perdition*, *The Haunting*) was also brought on to do rewrite work on a script penned by Andrew Kevin Walker (*Sleepy Hollow*, *Se7en*).



The Two Talbots—Lon Chaney Jr. and Benicio Del Toro as the Wolf Man.

Del Toro, however, has been one brilliant constant in the equation. "Benicio gave what I was hoping for—an eccentric and interesting performance. He's an unusual talent," said production designer Rick Heinrichs, whose credits include *The Big Lebowski*, *Sleepy Hollow*, *Fargo* and the last two *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies. "When I first heard that Benicio Del Toro was doing this, that's what initially caught my interest. It's a horror film, but with a Stanley Kubrick-like immersion into the head of the guy. The film gets down deep into the psyche of the main character through dream sequences and nightmares. I was just hoping it wasn't going to be a Merchant Ivory horror film," quipped Heinrichs, who was with the project seven months before shooting began and helped ease the transition from Romanek to Johnston.

WHAT WE SHOULD EXPECT

Aside from Heinrichs' mentioning of dream sequences and nightmares, the film's initial trailer also gives us a glimpse into what happens in the movie—with scenes of Talbot caught, tortured and in some kind of medical room. "The townspeople don't believe that he's the Wolfman," said Del Toro, "but he goes up to them and tells them, 'I am the Wolfman.' So they take him to the hospital to watch him, but he warns them, 'I am going to turn.'"

Del Toro's physical change is in the hands of makeup wizard Rick Baker, whose six Oscar wins include his work for 1962's *An American Werewolf in London*—renowned for its ground-breaking transformation scene. So, what can we expect to see this time? "That sequence is known for the extension of the snout, hands and body," noted Johnson. "We don't have that here, but Rick has a few new wrinkles he's created." The 6-foot-2 Del Toro had to wear a full body suit, and the makeup process took four hours of "putting it on, building it. And it's happening right in front of you, the guys are doing it right there," marveled Del Toro. "They were great guys, we'd be listening to music and joking around. It was a lot of fun putting it on. But, pardon my language, the bitch is taking off. I'd go in the chair for two hours and then I'd have to scrub it off . . . you can start to get a little cranky." Not to mention, making it near impossible to eat. "There would be hair in my mouth and hair in my hamburger," chuckled the actor, who can laugh about it now. "I'd be coughing and going, 'Furball! Furball!'"

But the emotional rollercoaster ride that Del Toro takes Talbot on bleeds through even the thickest makeup, as he hammers home the film's main theme: Examining the duality of man. "Within each person there's a dichotomy of human nature . . . the human animal operating out of instinct. My job is to show that visually, to build ideas out of those contrasts," said Heinrichs, whose sets accentuate the split personality of London (upper vs. lower class, city vs. country life) which mirrors the two-sided Talbot.

Johnson did the same behind the lens. "Talbot lives in two extremes; he's both wolf and man. Visually, that's how (this duality) manifests itself. How I try to convey that is to have something very light and very dark in the same shot, to have two extreme elements. It reflects the (Talbot) character."

Del Toro was eager to tackle such a multi-layered, and fictional, role. "As Che (in *Guernica*) I had to follow the line of history, and I could only stay on that line," said Del Toro. "With the Wolfman, I can play! I can skip the line, make up stuff . . . there's a lot of freedom for me. You want to do something where you know you have to invent, so it keeps the brain moving. It's more exciting." And Del Toro and Co. are excited to see the reaction of horror fans when the film opens in April.

AUDIENCE APPEAL

"This is a real horror film in the genre that they love," said Johnson. "We do love classic storytelling, which is what (the 1941 version) was about. This is a bow to the original. We pay our respects to it; we're not ignoring it. But audiences are sophisticated today. They have high expectations, and they'll be satisfied, too. We've brought a modern integrity to it . . . we've made a new classic." Del Toro agrees. "I have a feeling that if you take something, and you're true to it, and it has all the core horror elements, you'll cover a lot of ground between classic fans and modernists," the actor said. "A scare is a scare. But I hope they come out of it with something more than just being spooked. I hope they come out with an experience . . . a lesson about some misguided love."

And will moviegoers be rooting for Del Toro's Wolfman character just like he cheered for the classic screen monsters? "You betcha," Del Toro said. "I hope so. I hope they are not saying, 'Shoot him down! Light 'em up—here's a lighter!'"



(top) An early publicity still of *The Wolfman*
(middle) Del Toro and Hopkins follow a funeral procession
in Universal Pictures' *The Wolfman*
(bottom) Benicio attacks his maker, Rick Baker!

DVD REVIEWS

ICONS OF HORROR: HAMMER FILMS

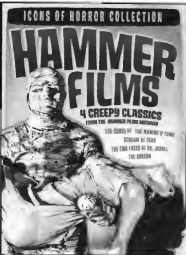
THE TWO FACES OF DR. JEKYLL
(1960) Directed by Terence Fisher
THE CURSE OF THE MUMMY'S TOMB
(1964) Directed by Michael Carreras
THE GORGON
(1964) Directed by Terence Fisher
SCREAM OF FEAR (aka TASTE OF FEAR)
(1961) Directed by Seth Holt

On the heels of *Icons of Adventure*, Sony/Columbia has released a second collection sharing many of the same qualities—containing as it does four more Hammer Films productions distributed in the United States by Columbia, three of which feature actor Christopher Lee, and one of which was filmed in black-and-white. The obvious difference is the substitution of “horror” for “adventure,” but far more significant in this case is the matter of presentation. While *Adventure* went all-out with feature-length commentary, interview tracks and supporting featurettes, *Icons of Horror*, for reasons of economy, forgoes the extras (save for the theatrical trailers) and gets straight to the main attractions. And while some will undoubtedly find this disappointing, the attractions themselves remain quite noteworthy...

The Two Faces of Dr. Jekyll takes its basic premise—but nothing else—from Stevenson's classic. Paul Massie (a television actor enjoying his only lead role for Hammer here) is the gruff and grumpy Henry Jekyll, whose neglected wife Kitty (Dawn Addams) is carrying on an affair with Jekyll's friend Paul Allen (Christopher Lee in one of his sleaziest roles as a lecherous, womanizing gambler). But when Jekyll's legendary potion does its work, the smooth and charming Edward Hyde seizes the opportunity to keep an eye on Kitty and Paul (with neither of them any the wiser), while indulging in a heady sampling of vices of his own in the process. Wine, women and song soon give way to drug abuse, murder and the threat of Jekyll's complete and total obliteration. This rarely-screened Hammer horror (also known as *House of Fright* in the U.S.) ranks as the most significant restoration in this collection. The benefits of the 2:35:1 scope transfer go without saying, but far more important is the Stateside arrival of the original, unexpurgated British version of the film. As scripted by Wolf Mankowitz and directed by Terence Fisher, *The Two Faces of Dr. Jekyll* was a darningly frank and adult rendition of the tale. No attempt is made to sugarcoat what the characters are doing behind closed doors (“She only gives her Christian name in bed”), the language is startlingly explicit for its day (“bitch” and “whore” are casually tossed about in a manner most viewers never associated with Hammer, and the interaction of an exotic dancer and her pet python sets a new cinematic standard for sexual suggestiveness (though it is pushing it more than a bit to suggest that a major character was completely incapable of eluding said python at a crucial moment). But it's all in keeping with the crucial theme of the abandonment of all inhibitions and social mores; making the attempt to “sanitize” the film for American family audiences all the more ludicrous. Well, kiss the American edit (barely released on tape by Columbia back in the day) goodbye—no more does Hyde tell Oliver Reed to “go to Hades,” and his infamous, anguished cry of “Damn you, Jekyll... DARN YOU!!!” may now begin its long, slow crawl out of our collective consciousness. (Curiously, though, Lee's resigned “to heck with it” remains—could that have been the actual line?) Whether or not you think you've seen this film, now is the time to do so for the first time.

Less significant but equally welcome in its original scope format is *The Curse of the Mummy's Tomb*, written and directed by literal Hammer head Michael Carreras himself. As one of the very few Hammer monster films to squeak by without the benefit of any iconic stars, this might have been a difficult sell as a solo release, but it fits into this collection quite nicely. Unique in its approach, *Curse* focuses less on the mummy himself (Dickie Owen as Ra-Amlaf), who doesn't lurch into action until nearly an hour into the film (!) and more on the conflict between serious archaeologists (Ronald Howard—no relation to Ron—and Jack Gwillim) and showbiz huckster Fred Clark (*Dr. Goldfoot and the Bikini Machine*), all of whom have different plans for the valuable discovery—and all of whom must face the consequences of breaking into the sacred burial chamber (a direct reference to the curse which allegedly afflicted the members of the true-life King Tut expedition). Meanwhile, top-billed Terence Morgan (as Beauchamp) is hiding an even darker secret... The enthusiastic cast maintains audience interest even while we're waiting for the mummy to (eventually) strike in a tale that owes even less to Hammer's *The Mummy* than Universal's *The Mummy's Hand* did to the Karloff original (no stock footage passed off as flashbacks, for one thing). Good fun all around.

The most familiar title in this collection is undoubtedly *The Gorgon*, which has never suffered from a lack of Stateside television and video circulation. Nevertheless, the one Peter Cushing/Christopher Lee team-up title (though the two barely meet, let alone interact) in the set is the one that's going to account for the majority of the sales—good strategy on the part of Sony/Columbia. For the record, the title creature (known as Magaera), the last survivor of a trio of legendary snake-haired sisters, continues the family tradition of literally petrifying all those unfortunate enough to gaze upon her directly. Her reign of terror in a small middle-European community is aided and abetted by Dr. Narnacoff (Cushing), who allows innocent victims to take the rap rather than compromise the dark secret he's hiding—a secret which involves the naive, unsuspecting Carla (Barbara Shelley). But the determined efforts of Paul Heltz (Richard Pasco) to clear his family name threaten the conspiracy, and all bets are off when the take-charge Professor Meister (Lee) arrives on the scene. Despite some cinematic special effects that hold up less than perfectly today, the rich, funereal atmosphere, John Gilling's literate screenplay, the more-than-capable cast and the impeccably controlled quality of Terence Fisher's direction make *The Gorgon* a Hammer standout. And now it's well-preserved on DVD in its original 1.85:1 image. What's more to say?



Rounding out the package is *Scream of Fear* (altered in title only from the British release *Taste of Fear*). Seth Holt's black-and-white shocker was the first—and, by popular consensus, the best—of a series of Hammer psycho thrillers devised to ride the coattails of a certain influential Alfred Hitchcock item from 1960. Susan Strasberg (*The Manlio*) stars as Penny Appleby, a young woman confined to a wheelchair who arrives at the family estate in order to reacquaint herself with her long-estranged father. Father, however, is away on business—or so they say. The real problem, however, is the fact that his lifeless body keeps showing up in the most unlikely places, seemingly intent on scaring Penny to death, while no one else can corroborate Penny's story, though she does receive sympathy in the form of Christopher Lee as Dr. Gerrard. (During one of his *Icons of Adventure* commentaries, Sangster allowed that while Lee has apparently drawn the line at any further reminiscences of his "terror picture" career, he would probably make an exception in the case of this film, of which he was particularly proud.) Okay—we've all seen countless variations on the "plot to drive the poor lady insane" scenario, but screenwriter Jimmy Sangster is far too clever to use it as a punch-line. *Scream of Fear* beats the odds with both intelligent storytelling and razor-sharp direction, making it another standout DVD debut.

"Bare bones" it may be, but *Icons of Horror* remains a must for casual fans and Hammer completists alike.

Shane M. Daltmann



CANNIBAL TERROR (Terreur Cannibale)

Directed by Alain Deruelle,
Olivier Mathot,
Julio Pérez Tabernero
(1981) Severin DVD

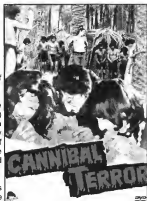
When the tagline reads, "Gut Munching Gore Hounds!" one has no qualms about what sort of audience this is marketed towards; the film, be warned.

Released by the rightly celebrated company Severin, who have made it their mission to dig up the most unlikely, most obscure choices in Eurohorror, from Jess Franco (more on his connection later) to the little-known director Deuruelle, *Cannibal Terror* is 90-minutes of nonsense involving a kidnapping gone awry, several rapes, and the much-promised cannibalization of bloody entrails by jungle natives. Two small-time crooks abduct the daughter of a rich banker, taking her to the home of a friend while they do their bidding to obtain ransom money. Raping the wife of their friend (not the greatest of houseguests, these), the wife turns the tables, in true *Last House on the Left* fashion, and ties him to a tree, leaving him for the savage cannibals.

One would be kind to call the pacing "deliberate", as clunky is the more accurate descriptor. As Jess Franco, whose *Mondo Cannibale* (1960) was plundered for stock footage usage here, suggests in the bonus DVD easter egg (it can be accessed on the Main Menu screen, when you highlight the *Cannibal Terror* title), Deuruelle wasn't much of a director, with only 2 porno films under his belt previous to this, both of which Franco claims were unwatchable. Franco agreed to let him use the footage, but Franco still seems unaware as to whether or not Deuruelle took him up on the offer, as he hints at not knowing if the film was ever made (clearly, the interview was conducted not solely for inclusion here, and this was but an aside in the interviewer and Franco's discussion).

Located elsewhere on the DVD is a "spicy deleted scene", calling to mind a similar extra on Severin's (review elsewhere-in-this-issue) DVD release of *Papaya*.

Aaron Graham



FREAKY FARLEY

Directed by Charles Roxburgh
(2007) Modern Media DVD



It's been said that the bumblebee's mere existence violates innumerable laws of aerodynamics. They say its wings are far too small for its body and should not be able to fly. Yet, the bumblebees can fly and every time it takes flight it splits scumfily in the faces of old lady science and her gap-toothed daughter common sense. The bumblebee is an anomaly that functions in spite of itself. It's the animal world equivalent to *Freaky Farley*. Because, much like the bumblebee, *Freaky Farley* shouldn't work as a film: the pace is far too slow, the dialogue is unnatural, the performances are stiff, and the storyline is often directionless. But through sheer force of will, writer/director Charles Roxburgh turns these flaws into strengths. Two wrongs may not make a right but, amazingly, four makes an entertaining movie.

Farley Wilder (co-screenwriter Matt Farley), is a creepy but likable man-child who is seen as a walking punchline by the residents of Morgantown who view his love of inner-tubing, striped shirts and voyeurism as just a little bit "freaky." True, Farley's nickname isn't unearned, but he's not completely to blame for his odd behavior. You see, when he was a young boy, his mother died under mysterious circumstances which left Farley's overbearing father (Kevin McGee) to subject him to a series of grueling arbitrary punishments. Although haunted by the ghosts of the past, Farley's miserable life is brightened by the arrival of Scarlett (Sharon Scatzo), a spunky Nancy Drew wannabe who helps to bring him out of his shell. But happiness is fleeting for Farley, and just when things start going smoothly, it all falls apart when a pack of hairy monsters called Troggs (not to be confused with The Troggs—another group of hairy monsters who attacked the pop charts in 1966 with their hit *Wild Thing*) start appearing on the outskirts of town. Will this affect the town's apple bobbing festival or will Farley's emerging confidence (and by confidence I mean barely suppressed rage) save the day?

On the surface *Freaky Farley* resembles just another instantly forgotten misfire, but as the film progresses it slowly reveals itself as a sly, subtle comedy that's quirky without being obnoxious. It's the kind of film that is constantly subverting expectations. For example, when I found out there was going to be a ninja in the film, I groaned because ninjas are like pirates; monkeys, robots; and, Mexican wrestlers—unfunny concepts favored solely by the unimaginative. Well, you could probably picture just how surprised I was when the ninja turned out to be a fairly amusing character. Especially when you consider he's just a scrawny guy in a black ski mask. From the town mayor (who sounds almost exactly like Pixie and Dixie's bow-tied nemesis Mr. Jinx) to the toddler who mercilessly bullies Farley, to Farley himself—who practically skips throughout his second act murder spree, this film is brimming with funny characters and clever little details. Unpredictable, engaging, and beautifully photographed on 16mm film, *Freaky Farley* is a low budget triumph and I eagerly anticipate Roxburgh's next project (whatever it may be).

Fans of DVD extras might be disappointed to learn that a trailer and (an admittedly informative) "making of" featurette are the only bonuses. A commentary would've been nice, but what are you gonna do? Besides complaining pointlessly, I mean.

Mike Sullivan

SHIVER (Eskalofrio)

Directed by Isidro Ortiz
(2008) Dark Sky DVD



Cascading sunlight over a scenic view of mountainside becomes a recurring motif in *Shiver*, the tale of a teenager, Santi (Junio Valverde, of *The Devil's Backbone*), with a rare disorder of breaking out in pustules should he be exposed to light over any extended period of time. We're introduced to one such breakout as Ortiz sets up where his film is going: mom, Julia (Mar Sodupe), and Santi, heading off into the wilds of a northern village, where Santi can effectively live a better life due to the mountains not allowing in so much sun. Shortly thereafter, brutal, throat-ripping attacks are visited upon sheep, a shepherd, and eventually, schoolchildren. Santi comes into contact with the slaughterer, becomes wise to a little-known town legend, correctly assuming that he'll need to do the detective legwork himself in order to tie the two together, especially after his pleas fall on deaf ears, and he himself is suspected of the murders by the local police. What follows is deeply contrived and rather by-the-numbers, particularly the over-the-top, unlikely finale and subsequent reveal of the toothy killer, but this Spanish production revels in the enigmatic so well for so long, that it doesn't seem to matter.

Executive produced by Álvaro Augustin, one of the producers on *Pan's Labyrinth*, with art direction by the Oscar-winning Pilar Revuelta, also an artisan that amazing film, *Shiver* is comparable to that earlier work for its evocative imagining of a childhood (re-)awakening, and the connection between a teenager (here, a few years older) and a developed creature of the fantastic (however much more realistically rendered it may be).

Dark Sky's release is short on extras, save for a trailer that, unfortunately, gives away most of the best scares. Steer clear before watching the film!

Arson Graham

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BEYOND THE DOOR

Directed by Ovidio G. Assonitis
(1974) Code Red DVD

"WHOOO... ARE... YOUU..."

Those words croaked by the dubbed voice of TV's *Nanny* and the Professor (Juliet Mills) have a resonance for people of a certain age. Those three words—followed by the visual of Mills floating through the air in a dark bedroom will forever be branded on those who saw the infamous spot aired on independent TV stations over and over and over again. There was no getting around the fact that *Beyond the Door* was a cheap, tawdry cash-in on *The Exorcist* of the same period. Its effect was even further muted when it was aired with very little editing on *The CBS Late Night Movie* a scant few months after its theatrical release. But, as they say, pun intended, the Devil is in the details.



The wife of a hip music producer, Mills tends to her family with a light hand. Her young son and daughter are allowed to read racy books (her daughter carries a dozen copies of *Erich Segal's Love Story* with her at all times) and both swear like drunken pirates. They live in a beautiful apartment in San Francisco (as with most Italian genre films of this period, this extends to a few exterior shots stateside

with interiors filmed in Rome) and Mills is expecting her third child. As an expectant mother, she experiences radical mood swings, smashing her husband's aquarium for no reason other than "I wanted to do it!" In one gross-out scene that surpasses its inspiration, Mills satiates her cravings with a rotten banana peel scraped off the pavement. Eventually a bearded stranger named Dmitri (David Johnson), earlier seen making a pact with the devil for ten more years of earthly existence, re-enters Mills' life and presides over her hellish delivery, green slime spewing everywhere.

Beyond the Door goes the extra yard with bizarre visuals. Take the opening scene set against a black field populated by candles. A writhing naked girl on an altar has Johnson's bearded face briefly superimposed over hers. Why? A succession of sinister faces that the audience is led to believe are members of a satanic cult are later shown to be merely harmed studio musicians trying to bait out the film's disco theme song. Why? Mills' baby is eventually born—without a mouth. Why? Who indeed, knows why?

Assonitis would continue to crank 'em out cheap and easy in his native Italy, usually employing American actors. He would return to the themes of devilish children and metaphysical paranoia with *The Visitor* (1979), a visually explicit mess that makes absolutely no sense whatsoever. Among Mel Ferrer, John Huston, Sam Peckinpah and Shelley Winters, *The Visitor's* chief casting coup was in securing Franco Nero in a silent cameo as Jesus Christ! A digital release of this title, packed with extras would be more than welcome.

To truly appreciate *Beyond the Door*, one would have to remember the momentous cultural baggage *The Exorcist* carried with it at the time of its original release. A horrific film, it rattled Vietnam-era America to its very core, prompting many people to return to church. When *Beyond the Door* and its increasingly cheap Italian brethren began to pile up at the local drive-ins and grindhouses, it was a reassuring reminder to people that *The Exorcist*, for all of its vaunted explorations on the nature of good and evil, was only a movie... only a movie... only a movie...

Greg Goodhall

ISOLATION

Directed by Billy O'Brien
(2005) First Look Pictures



On a lonely stretch of rain-soaked Irish countryside, dairy farmer Dan Reilly (John Lynch) has become a man literally at world's end. His wife has left him, leaving Dan sole proprietor of the estate. His financial situation has sunk so low, that he has reluctantly agreed to allow a number of his prize cattle to become subjects of a low-key scientific study. Local veterinarian and Dan's former lover, Orla (Essie Davis), oversees the health and well-being of his animals during the study, while Eastern-European scientist John (Marcel Iures) secretly toils in the study's veiled roots of genetic engineering. On the peripheries of the property, gypsy Jamie (Sean Harris) has set up camp (much to the annoyance of landowner Reilly) with his girlfriend Mary (Ruth Negga), who is hiding out from her city bound family—who are less than enamored of their relationship.

During a stormy evening, one of the experimental cows gives paired birth to a calf, which proves to be spontaneously pregnant itself, the victim of John's genetic acceleration program. Euthanized soon after birth, on examination the calf's womb splits forth a horrifying half dozen stillborn mutations, all of whom are assessed as having had no chance of survival as the foetuses formed in reverse biology, organs encased in their own skeleton. As the night rolls on, the true horror of John's experiment is revealed—intentions to accelerate and advance the growth of stronger dairy cattle give way to the nightmarish realization that the genetic engineering has spiraled out of control, spawning a parasitic new life-form. Terror escalates when the shocking revelation arises that one of the foetuses is found to have survived and its contagion can be passed to humans, as well as the ungodly fact that it has started evolving at an unimaginable rate.

It is something of a surprise that Irish filmmaker Billy O'Brien's *Isolation* (2005), though it drew numerous accolades out of screenings across various international film festivals, remains such an overlooked work as well as having been consigned to direct-to-DVD obscurity almost globally. Behind its nondescript title and relatively low-key promotional artwork (used almost parrot-fashion worldwide) lies one of the most undeniably terrifying horror films that this reviewer has seen in some time. However, O'Brien's film is far from reliant on clichéd scene tactics or dollops of gory effects ala most of its contemporaries. Instead, it creates an atmosphere of mounting dread and tense white-knuckled paranoia by grounding itself amidst a wholly realistic backdrop of believable characterisations to offset its (admittedly) ludicrous premise. Essentially, the idea of an Eastern European biologist breeding mutant killer cows lends itself more to comedic overtones akin to Jonathan King's killer sheep saga *Black Sheep* (2007), than it does to the daffy serious and altogether unrepentantly grim descent into the nightmarish hell that is O'Brien's *Isolation*. O'Brien's film manages to slither its way under your skin and pump up its genetically modified horrors to arguably unbearable levels by its final act.

Key to the film gaining such a stranglehold over its viewer is O'Brien's deadpan approach to his subject matter, as well as an intelligently literate script with realistically fleshed out (and believable) characters as written by O'Brien himself. One garners the impression of watching an outing constructed by a seasoned veteran throughout, which is a feat in itself when it's taken into account that *Isolation* is O'Brien's feature film debut (after a handful of shorts made in the mid-to-late nineties). O'Brien's strong script is brought to vivid life through his and producer Ruth Kenley-Letts' commendable decision to cast some noteworthy faces amongst the piece's core ensemble quartet, locally Northern Irish actor John Lynch (*The Secret of Roan Inish*, 1994, and *Best*, 2000) as beleaguered farmer Dan Reilly, who lends a humanistic, worldly quality to his character. Exceptional support comes from Australian actress Essie Davis (*The Matrix Reloaded*, 2003, and *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, 2003), Sean Harris (*24 Hour Party People*, 2002, and *Creep*, 2004) and Irish-Ethiopian actress Ruth Negga (*Breakfast on Pluto*, 2005), all of whom rise well above the occasion and deliver rich, textured performances far beyond the usual expectations of the genre.

The cinematography of Robbie Ryan (*Black Lane*, 2007) creates an almost documentary feel throughout, embellished with eye-catching flourishes of creative (largely hand-held) ingenuity that invoke the post-industrialised isolation of the film as well as capture the emptiness and desolation of the landscape O'Brien's horrors unfold against. In addition to this, an eerie, haunting score by predominantly television-based composer Adrian Johnston makes *Isolation* a horror film that sets itself well apart from its peers. Long-time horror aficionados may recognise hints of *Alien* (1979), *The Thing* (1982), or even a subtle play into the "viral-apocalypse" genre dominated by the 28 Days/Weeks Later films of recent years. The latter is evident once Marcel Iures' scientist determines that the only feasible manner in which to prevent his parasitic creation from spreading is to ensure that no-one leaves Reilly's farm, thereby completely isolating them from the outside world. However, *Isolation* manages to put distance between itself and its progenitors thanks in whole to O'Brien's smart script and assured direction, drawing unfettered suspense and nail-biting tension while Bob Keen's (of Image Animation and Hellbiker fame) nauseatingly ghoulish genetic hybrid goes its way through man and beast alike with the sole purpose of procreating and propagating its number. The film's only negative is its glaringly obvious epilogue sequence, seemingly engineered as one final sting in the tail, but after nearly an hour and a half of genuine nerve-shredding terror, a solitary (albeit minor) blemish is wholly forgivable. Billy O'Brien is most certainly a talent to keep a close eye on, and his globally-conscious "science gone mad" morality tale is one of the most prescient and unrelentingly terrifying experiences in horror cinema of the last decade.

Michael Thomson

RODAN (1956)

Sora no daikajū Rodon (Rodan: Monster From the Sky)

WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS (1966)

Furankenshutain no kajū: Sanda tai Gaira (Frankenstein's Monster: Sanda vs. Gailah)

Directed by Inoshiro (Ishiro) Honda

Classic Media/Sony Toho DVD

With the belated release of *Godzilla's Revenge* and *Terror of Mechagodzilla*, Classic Media's official Big G lineup has been exhausted—but their Toho Master Collection continues with two of director Inoshiro Honda's best-remembered titles.

Rodan scarcely requires a Stateside introduction: not only is the titular pterodactyl (say that five times fast) the second-most recognizable monster in the Toho stable, but he (actually *they*) debuted in the first Japanese monster movie to be filmed in living color. Toho stalwart Kenji Sahara (aka Sawara) stars as Shigeru Kawamura, chief engineer of a coal mining operation suddenly beset with multiple disasters. The flooding and seismic activity are bad enough, but those he can understand and deal with. The unexpected attack of giant, hungry prehistoric insects (unnamed in the American version but known as the Meganulon in Japan) forces a reappraisal of the situation—but the deadliest threat of all soon extends its destructive influence well beyond the limits of the mining community. Yes, Japan is under siege again—not by a fire-breathing dragon but by a pair of gigantic winged horrors capable of reducing cityscapes to rubble by the power of their sonic boom alone. In classic fashion, traditional military might proves useless against the two Rodans; and the only hope for humanity lies in the invocation of the powers of Mother Nature. . . .

As with *Gojira* before it, *Rodan* was reworked from its original version for U.S. distribution. The early segments detailing the mine operation were shortened, and George Takei was brought in to supply narration as Shigeru (not to mention virtually every other male character). U.S. audiences were treated to every bit of the monster footage and the spectacular destruction wrought by special effects maestro Eiji Tsuburaya, and the majority of the film was allowed to run exactly as Honda put it together in the first place. But while there was nothing comparable to the Raymond Burr footage shot for and incorporated into *Godzilla, King of the Monsters*, the American version of *Rodan* did include a notable addition at the very beginning: stock footage depicting the boom of scientific/military technology (culminating, of course, in the detonation of the hydrogen bomb) tried to tie in to a popular science-fiction theme and implied that *Rodan* was yet another byproduct of nuclear testing—something he most assuredly was not. So while the official Stateside debut of the Honda original contains very little in the way of fresh, uncharted territory or visual surprises (the film was always presented in the "fullscreen" 1.33:1 aspect ratio, so there aren't even any widescreen revelations to be had), it's still quite welcome for the sake of completion and clarification. Naturally, Classic Media presents both versions of the film in exemplary condition.

Neither this nor the co-feature in this two-pack feature the exhaustive extras that were part and parcel of Classic Media's *Godzilla* releases—no audio commentary, no publicity galleries, no "Bill's Kitchen" minidocs. However, the *Rodan* disc contains the excellent hour-long documentary *Bringing Godzilla down to Size*, written by Classic Media's original G-experts Steve Ryfle and Ed Godziszewski, directed by Norman England and narrated by none other than *Repo Man* director Alex Cox! This is a respectful look at the evolution of Toho's special effects department, from the glory days of Tsuburaya through the age of digital enhancement in the twenty-first century. The question is ultimately raised—will there always be a place for traditional rubber-suited actors and hand-crafted miniature sets for them to trample; or will the industry be forced to "move on" and keep up with "the times"? (Well, we've had one so-called *Godzilla* film with an all-digital monster, and we all know how well the fans accepted *that*, so while legitimate advances in technology are always welcome, I don't anticipate a Toho production in which *Godzilla* is not played by an actor anytime in the foreseeable future. . . .)

Disc Two of the Classic Media release jumps ahead ten years from *Rodan* to serve up *War of the Gargantuas*, produced while Toho was actively courting the American box office by casting Stateside performers in their homegrown thrillers. Nick Adams, of course, had co-starred in *Monster Zero* and *Frankenstein Conquers the World* (both 1965), and Honda's 1966 thriller was shot as a direct sequel to the latter item (released on DVD by Media Blasters)—though this connection was deliberately obscured in America. Adams did not return, but his co-star Kumi Mizuno (*Mañana/Attack of the Mushroom People* and *What's Up, Tiger Lily?*) did—this time joined by Russ Tamblyn (*The Hauling*, *Twin Peaks*). As Dr. Paul Stewart, Tamblyn must try to convince the Japanese military that a recent wave of destruction and mayhem perpetrated by a furry, humanoid giant couldn't possibly be the work of the friendly, childlike creature that he and Mizuno (as Akemi) cared for in their laboratory in its infancy. He's right, but there is a connection, all the same. The friendly brown giant was an offshoot of cells cast off by the giant, mutant "Frankenstein" monster from the 1965 film (both features were scripted by Ruben Bercovitch) and reached maturity on dry land. However, a different set of cells from the same creature developed underseas and grew into an evil-tempered green behemoth (otherwise identical in every way). Once the distinction is made, the brown creature is dubbed "Sanda" and the green giant becomes "Gaira" (or "Gailah" when pronounced in English). Not that the names carried any actual weight in America—all "Frankenstein" references were eliminated for the benefit of sequel-shy viewers, and the creatures simply became "Brown Gargantua" and "Green Gargantua." In either case, the plot plays out in a similar fashion: Japan develops a weapon that nearly does Gaira in (the concentrated-light Maser cannons, frequently revived as stock footage in subsequent *kaiju* films, were created for this production), but kind-hearted Sanda won't let it happen. The problem is that while Sanda retains a soft spot for the human race thanks to his domesticated childhood, Gaira won't have any of that, so the war is on—and no matter which version you watch, Honda and Tsuburaya deliver the spectacular goods once again.

Classic Media, naturally, has served up both the Japanese version and the American rendition in impeccably processed 2.35:1 Tohoscope. (Some viewers will discern what appears to be an extra set of black bars—or a "matte within a matte" effect—giving the illusion that the image has been cropped too severely, which is not actually the case.) But this time, there's no clear-cut choice for a "definitive" version. The Japanese cut, of course, is the full-length "Frankenstein" sequel we never got to see on these shores. On the other hand, American star Russ Tamblyn filmed his scenes in English, and that particular performance can only be heard in the U.S. release. But fear not—the scene that really matters is identical in both versions. Yes, indeed, the infamous, grating shipboard nightclub number "The Words Get Stuck in My Throat" (later covered by the band Devol) was always an English-language song (unlike, say, "Save the Earth" from *Godzilla Vs. the Smog Monster*), and you'll be listening to exactly what Gaira was subjected to (could you possibly blame him for his reaction in this case?) no matter which option you select on the DVD!

After Classic Media's unpopular decision to delay individual releases of their last two *Godzilla* titles for the sake of an expensive box set, it was extremely considerate of them to package these two latest "Toho Master Collection" entries as a convenient double feature. The results—as always—come highly recommended to all *kaiju* aficionados.



Shane M. Dailman

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PIECES

Directed by Juan Piquer Simon
(1981) Grindhouse Releasing DVD

Juan Piquer Simon, that same sweet, subtle, sophisticated gent who later blessed us with the gloriously ludicrous *Stugs*, delivers an astoundingly crass and repulsive slasher opus might very well be the grossest, goriest, most sexist and objectionable entry in the kill the collegians academia-set body count genre that was highly fashionable throughout the early to mid 80's (other notable entries in this subgenre include *Hell Night*, *The House on Sorority Row*, *The Initiation*, and *Sorority House Massacre*). A depraved, heavy-breathing, chainsaw-wielding misogynistic psycho lunatic viciously murders and dismembers assorted pretty young promiscuous harlot coeds at a Boston university, gathering up their body parts so he can make a grisly composite of the perfect woman! It's up to a ramrod jerk detective (gruffly played with mucho macho muscle by the incomparable Christopher George) and a gutsy undercover lady cop (Chris' hot real-life wife Linda Day) to nab the twisted sicko. Likely suspects include stuffy dean Edmund Purdom, dweeby homosexual professor Jack Taylor (who's acted in movies for everyone from Jess Franco to Roman Polanski!), and hulking creep handyman Paul Smith (yep, Bluto in Robert Altman's *Popeye*). This wonderfully rank scuzzfest not only delivers a hefty plenitude of sleazy sex, gratuitous distaff nudity, and hideously explicit splatter, but also features a token Oriental kung fu expert, Jane Fonda-style workout aerobics, a throbbing Goblinesque prog-rock score (which director Simon personally considers to be "garbage"), a vacuous disco bunny on roller skates getting turned into a bloody pulp after she crashes into a large pane of glass, the truly tasteless moment where a foxy topless young woman wets her pants as she's about to be carved-up by the killer, and a marvelously messed-up "you gotta be kiddin' me!" surprise shock ending.

The DVD for this beautifully bent, batty and berserk baby took seemingly forever to be released, but the two disc special edition package that's finally come out was well worth the wait. The first disc offers a nice widescreen presentation of the film along with three different audio options (which includes the original score by Lobrado Pastor) and the theatrical trailer. However, it's the great second disc that boasts the real yummy goodies. For starters, there's two terrific lengthy interviews with both director Juan Piquer Simon and actor Paul Smith: Simon has a bunch of choice stories to relate about the flick while Smith not only discusses *Pieces*, but also relates lots of nifty anecdotes about such films as *Midnight Express*, *Popeye*, *Dune*, *Red Sonya*, and *Sonny Boy*. Next we've got a wealth of amazing down'n'dirty exploitation feature trailers (*An American Hippie in Israel* in particular looks like it's a complete campy hoot!). On top of that, there's also snazzy bios and filmographies on the principal cast and crew members along with a few tasty extras. Oh yeah—let's not forget the cool Easter egg or two on both discs. And remember folks, it's exactly what you think it is. In this case this means a prime putrid piece of pure unabashed and unadulterated trash that any true fan of severely deviant and disgusting degenerate cinema should enjoy.

GRINDHOUSE RELEASING
PRESENTS

PIECES

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FOR A CHAINSAW MASSACRE!

Joe Wawzygniak

SALO, OR THE 120 DAYS OF SODOM

(*Sàlo o le 120 giornate di Sodoma*)

Directed by Pier Paolo Pasolini

(1975 Criterion DVD)

A string quartet performs a strangely solemn version of the torch song "These Foolish Things" against stark black on white titles. A bibliography is helpfully provided in the opening credits. Four fascist noblemen retire to a crumbling villa in the final days of World War II for some heady fin de siècle fun 'n' games. Abducting 18 jailbait youths from the surrounding village, the men enlist the aid of four aging prostitutes, "fairy godmothers" to recount the most depraved "bedtime stories" of their careers, to be later forcibly reenacted by the strangely complicit youths. Unspeakably vile acts of degradation ensue, including a banquet of human feces gobbled down by the participants. Notorious for emptying out theatres, the film's stauncher fans wait with breathless anticipation for the final acts of torture and murder in a desolate courtyard to the strains of choral music.

Will we ever tire of tearing away the festering scab this wiry Italian left as his unintentional valedictorian statement? Without question the ugliest and most beautiful film of all time, *Salò* remains Pasolini's most popular film in a glittering crown with world cinema classics such as *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (1964), *Teorema* (1968), *The Canterbury Tales* (1972) and *The Arabian Nights* (1974). The consternation surrounding the film is much like the controversy that still surrounds Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971). Fans who react favorably to that film's sex, violence and sadistic outlook would find little to admire in 2007: *A Space Odyssey* (1968) or *Barry Lyndon* (1975). Far lesser directorial hands, in particular from Pasolini's native Italy would later adapt less artful means to wrench nausea from appalled, delighted audiences.

Stuffed shirts will endlessly defend *Salò*, saying it was intended as an indictment against complacent Italian society, a howl of rage from a director whose own brother was killed by Mussolini's black shirts, blah blah blah. The banquet of shit is intended as a metaphor against processed Western culture, blah blah blah. The nonstop sex and nudity is meant to illustrate the human body as a commodity, blah blah blah. The people who actively seek this film out to watch over and over again won't care about any of this high talk, meant to assuage our guilt feelings over our unabashed admiration for this gorgeous atrocity. Those who find the film distasteful will be delighted to learn that Pasolini was brutally murdered shortly after the film's completion by a young hustler that could have stepped forward from this film's lineup of victims.

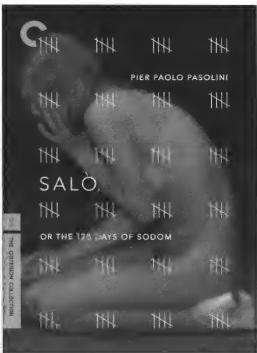
Sensing that there exists a core audience of perverts who will seize this film in any now permutation, Criterion has now released *Salò* in a new double-disc set that will have the most jaded of this film's countless admirers—ye humble author is one in good standing—goose-stepping with joy. The film is presented in a breathtaking new transfer, rendering previous versions of this film, usually presented in washed out browns and blues, obsolete. The exterior scenes, in particular the shots set around the villa, jump from the screen in vibrant, verdant greens. You'll be able to count every sequin on the ball gowns worn by the monstrous Mesdames, and note with new appreciation the richly textured faces in the film's most notorious scene.

But most notable of all the additions to the latest Criterion edition is something this writer never knew existed—an *English language dub track*! Those who would otherwise turn this film away due to an unwillingness to read subtitles can now hear the film's morbid dialogue barked out by the familiar voices found in many an old spaghetti western! Will wonders never cease?

As for the second disc of extras—one will find excessive justification for a project that needs no such justification, as *Salò* is pure poetry that serves no other purpose other than its own existence. To wit: "Salò: Yesterday and Today" is a 33-minute documentary with interviews with Pasolini collaborator Jean Claude-Blatte, actors Helene Surgere (who played Signora Vaccari, the most delightful of the film's crones) and Ninetto Davda with footage of Pasolini directing the final scene. Enthusiasts will hear the French language-dub version of the film in this segment, "Fade to Black," 23-minutes, has interviews with Bernardo Bertolucci, Catherine Breillat, John Maybury and David Forgacs. "The End of Salò" is a 40-minute documentary features actors Antinora Nemour and Paolo Bonacelli, Pupi Avati (best known as the director of *The House with the Laughing Windows* and Zeder who served as the film's screenwriter who claims he's still unable to watch the film) and production designer Dante Ferretti. In this segment, photographer Fabian Cavallios rightfully declares that the photos showing the torture and degradation of the Iraqi prisoners of war in Abu Ghariib, right down to the dog collars worn by the victims along with the forced gay sex proved that Pasolini was indeed clairvoyant. A 12-minute interview with Dante Ferretti and 26-minute chat with Jean-Pierre Gorin completes the package.

It can be argued that one of the chief functions of art is presenting ugly truths in a beautiful manner, *Salò* will continue to draw thrill-seekers who will come to the film for "all the wrong reasons," and hopefully move and challenge them with its stark and unrelenting imagery.

Greg Goodsell



THE DEADLY BEES

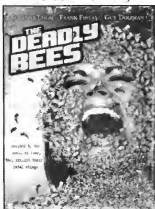
Directed by Freddie Francis

(1967) Legend Films

Academy Award winning cinematographer / director Freddie Francis handled his fair share of dreck in the twenty-three years that comprised the bulk of his career as a filmmaker, but when it came to providing rich, imaginative set-pieces and visual aplomb for the genre exploits usually handed to him, it could never be said that he slept on the job. Alternating between providing the stark, haunting images for material he himself would never be offered (Jack Clayton's *The Innocents*; David Lynch's *The Elephant Man*), Francis had to contend with less-than-stellar scripts (1967's *They Came From Beyond Space*) and immeasurably low budgets for the films in which he got to call the shots. Still, incisively taking pride in the craft itself, Francis was able to elevate even the lowliest film incalculably through his masterful color schemes and inspired in-camera techniques (his frequent usage of the spilt-droplet, implemented in order to keep backgrounds and foregrounds in focus at the same time, is put to good use here). It's to his credit that not only did rival UK horror production companies Amicus and Hammer employ his services, but that the results are some of the finest films either company ever assigned their names to the portmanteau Torture Garden for the former, and the forth—if you consider the Christopher Lee-less *Brides of Dracula*—in the *Dracula* series for the latter, *Dracula Has Risen From the Grave*. Still, his considerable talent couldn't keep *The Deadly Bees* from being such an insipid programmer, easy to predict and marred by a one-dimensional screenplay lacking any sense of vitality.

Opening inside the cramped quarters of a random ministry affairs official, the film begins with a curious prologue that only serves to enlighten the viewer of the species that will, assumedly, run-amok in the scenes to come (one would think the title itself would be enough of a dead giveaway). It's a curious addition, the purpose of which is but a stale punchline that reaches fulfillment only in the film's very last image, enlivened by a hazy recall of *The Third Man*'s closing shot. Frantically smash-cutting to a rip-roaring guitar (played by none other than future Rolling Stone guitarist Ron Wood, then part of short-lived group The Birds), the film then picks up in an elaborate studio space, as Francis' camera obsesses over the technical gadgetry and wizardry used in order to record these antiquated lip-synched music video promos. Soon we're introduced to our lead, female vocalist Vicki Robbins (Suzanna Leigh, of *Deadlier Than the Male* and erotic Hammer entry *Lust for a Vampire*), in preparations to mimic for a promo that she's sure to be her latest in a string of hits. Daring amongst a plethora of phallic-lensed television cameras, Robbins soon begins to feel woozy, eventually fainting in front of the cameramen, her voice electronically emanating the song as her lifeless body lies limp. She's ordered by her wheezing-dealing, mustachioed agent (Maurice Good, of *Quatermass and the Pit*) to convalesce at the tiny British Isle known as Seagull Island, staying at the home of Ralph Hargrove (Guy Doleman, of *Thunderball* and *The Ipcress File*), a tirelessly impatient and dreadfully stiff beekeeper, telegraphed early as the villain of the piece (he's even shown whipping a dog!). His dour, long-suffering wife, played by Catherine Finn (*The Creeping Flesh*), gets to portray an angsty, chain-smoking caricature of a woman, as does the local barkeep's daughter, Doris (Katy Wild, of *Dr. Terror's House of Horrors*), an untroubled, sprightly spirit who's asked to help prepare Vicki's room before her arrival. (Actress Wild resembles a slightly frumpier cousin or sis of Diana Rigg.)

Frank Finlay, of *Gumshoe*, *Twisted Nerve*, and *Toke Hooper's Life Force*, is Hargrove's well-established island adversary when it comes to the almost-fanatical study of the honeybee. Vicki begins to ingratiate herself in his company soon after Hargrove begins to act a little fussy with his homestead. Vicki begins to uncover some surface weirdness, which is, at first, innocuous enough (she notices hypodermic punctures on Hargrove's horse), but the questionable soon turns unquestionably deadly when the family pet and Hargrove's wife are savagely and viciously stung to death by bees (Francis imparts this information byway of some crude superimpositions of fuzzy, unclear red-and-yellow speckles over footage of the yelping victims). With more conventional secrets to uncover, Vicki begins to fear for her life at the Hargrove residence, culminating in a near-deadly chaotic assault as she comically parades about in skimpy underwear (the camera lingering on her cleavage-enhancing bra, as per tradition of this chaste period of non-nudity in the films of Amicus, Hammer and others). The film does a final about-face in terms of the culprit responsible for these ingenious scientific crimes, pitting Vicki in harm's way once again before her final rescue, but the film still ends on a dubious note, leading one to believe that the manipulation of nature's insects for one's gain will surely find footing with a scientist immoral enough to engage in these deeds.



Actress Leigh is seemingly incapable of not looking perturbed, and her big, startling eyes and full-rounded lips go a long way in the suspenseful, sneaking-around scenes for evoking sympathy. She's off putting in

the right ways, and has just enough glamour to be believable as both a popular singer and one not completely out of place in rural life. Finlay and Doleman are both adequate as the two competitive island beekeepers, with Finlay in particular providing an electrified performance, but once you find out the parts were written specifically for Boris Karloff and Christopher Lee, it becomes harder to give this rather unremarkable duo a fair shake. In the end, it's really not their fault.

Collaborating once again with director Francis is *Psycho* novelist Robert Bloch (the aforementioned *Torture Garden*), who is credited alongside Anthony Marriott (an author of several UK teleplays, such as *The Avengers*) for this adaptation of the novel *A Taste for Honey* by renowned historian/philosopher/all-around distinguished luminary Henry Fitzgerald Heard. The original novel (unread by me, as is 1955 live-drama version for *The Elgin Hour* remains unseen and unavailable) seemingly retains the two warning apikars against one another, but the addition of a pop singer a la Petula Clark or Dusty Springfield purely was an invention of either Bloch's or Marriott's.

In the annals of exploitation film history, this picture was a bit of a progenitor: a pair of television movies, *Curse Harrington's Killer Bees* (featuring Gloria Swanson, out of retirement) and 1976's *The Savage Bees*, buzzed their way into shag-carpeted living rooms in the mid-seventies, a mere two years shy from Irwin Allen's big-budgeted schlock-fest *The Swarm* (1978). *Invasion of the Bee Girls* (Denis Sanders, 1973) used the insects as a jumping-off point for a movie about feminism, while 1978's "other" Bee-Picture, simply titled *The Bees*, was a United States-Mexican co-production featuring the likes of John Saxon, Angel Tompkins, and John Carradine.

As yet another licensee by Legend Films from Paramount Pictures (who couldn't possibly be bothered with releasing such a modest title), *The Deadly Bees* has never looked so good, with a proper widescreen transfer and a more-than-satisfactory sound mix, serving justice to composer Wilfred Joseph's schizophrenic, terror-invoking score. Unfortunately, as an in-store, Best Buy exclusive, Freddie Francis completists will have to work a little harder to locate a copy, as the usual ability to click on a few online-ordering buttons will prove to be a fruitless venture.

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THE QUEEN OF BLACK MAGIC

Directed By Lilek Sudjo
(1979) Mondo Macabro DVD

In a rustic village in the Indonesian wilds, a wedding party is beset by weird visions and satanic happenings. The bridegroom-to-be blames it all on the girl he dated before his betrothal, Murni (south Asian horror icon Suzanna). Despite her pleas of innocence, the vengeful mob kills Murni's mother, sets her hut on fire and leaves her for dead. Murni is then befriended by an evil

magician (Indo mainstay W. D. Mochtar) who schools her in the black arts. One by one, the vengeful Murni appears to her tormentors and kills them in increasingly horrific ways. Veins burst forth from arms, bodies explode and even one unfortunate victim tears off his head with his bare hands! Having vanquished the evil doers, Murni wishes to return to normal life, but her mentor is not done with her just yet. A goody two-shoes Islamic priest comes in to complicate matters, and there is a special effects-laden showdown.

Queen of Black Magic was an early attempt by Indo filmmakers to crack the lucrative western film market. Marketed under countless titles in an attempt to cash in on the Shaw Brothers' *Black Magic* series, the film did get some grindhouse play and a wide stateside video release. In spite of its indigenous Indonesian atmosphere, many of the shock sequences and gore effects on view are appropriated from American sources, most notably Brian DePalma's *The Fury* (1978). *Queen of Black Magic*'s chief allure and success relies on the charisma of lead actor Suzanna, a film star in her native land since childhood. Calling to mind a heady combination of Elizabeth Taylor and Imelda Marcos, *Queen* belongs to Suzanna and Suzanna alone, he goes the gamut from pathetic and desperate to haughty and imperious. The melodramatic excesses are off the map, and *Queen of Black Magic* doesn't skimp on bizarre visuals, a crying kidnapped infant cradled in a hammock of boa constrictors just one of its countless delirious images.

Public response to Mondo Macabro's Indonesian releases has proved to be popular, but it appears that the musty jungle well from whence this company has delved into for their previous DVDs has begun to run dry. The widescreen transfer is colorful and crisp (with its English dub track being the only available audio option), miles away superior to previous stateside VHS releases. The extras on this disc have become increasingly skimpy. It seems that Mondo Macabro shot their lead on the double-disc release of *Virgins from Hell*. There is a text essay on the making of the film that includes a biography of Suzanna (who has since returned to native movie screens in 2008 with *Hantu Ambulans*) and a homebrewed trailer. Also included is the 10-minute documentary "Indonesian Light & Magic: A Tour around the Studio of SFX Maestro El Badrum," a fascinating video tour of this notable Third World makeup maestro goofing off in his grass hut studio with various monster masks. The segment also includes a visit to the impressive subterranean sets he created for *Virgins from Hell* and *The Devil's Sword*—however, some, if not most of this footage will be familiar to viewers who have seen the previous Mondo Macabro documentaries on their previous Indonesian titles.

All in all, this shouldn't deter anyone from picking this up posthaste, and one waits for baited anticipation for other Suzanna vehicles from Mondo Macabro such as the hallucinatory *Hungry Snake Woman* and *Snake Queen*. O, Suzanna!

Greg Goodhall

LONG DREAM (Nagai Yume)

Directed by Higuchinsky
(2000) Bone Asia / Facets DVD

Just when you thought the J-horror craze has finally run its course, along comes *Long Dream* to skitter out of the darkness, and remind you that this genre is still very much alive—even if audience interest isn't. Yet for those who may be willing to give the J-horror movement a second chance, *Long Dream* represents a small step forward for the genre. Unlike the endless legions of Ringo rip-offs this isn't just another movie about possessed electronics and the pale hitch-stepped children who love them, it's a cerebral and sometimes effective mood piece that examines life, death, obsession and immortality.

Late one night, a hospitalized girl awakens to find an ominous figure staring at her from her doorway. Although believing the grim specter of death is paying her one final visit, the figure turns out to be Mukuda (Kashiwabara Shuui), another patient who is afraid of falling asleep and instead passes the time by wandering aimlessly throughout the hospital corridors. Mukuda suffers from a rare neurological disorder called "long dreams". What this means is that while dreaming, time passes far more quickly than it does in reality. To Mukuda, eight hours of sleep can often feel like three days, three years or even three centuries. To make matters



worse, this condition has not only shattered his grasp on reality, but it has also managed to affect his physical appearance as well, with Mukuda slowly morphing into a gangly, otherworldly monstrosity. If that wasn't bad enough, it appears that the long dream virus is slowly spreading throughout the hospital is Mukuda to blame or is this simply another one of his doctor's (Horiuchi Masami) "secret experiments?"

Shot on video and cursed with a paltry special effects budget that appears to have been spent on whatever was left over at Spencer's Gifts following the Halloween rush, *Long*

Dream lacks the professional polish of director Higuchinsky's previous effort *Uzumaki*. Fortunately, Higuchinsky's eye for color and composition quickly renders the monetary constraints irrelevant. With a mixture of foreboding dread and unrelenting sorrow, *Long Dream* expertly recreates the surreal atmosphere of Junji Ito's original manga (which isn't too surprising considering that Ito co-wrote the screenplay). Also of note are the quiet understated performances particularly Shuui as the eerily reserved Mukuda, who shrugs absently in the face of death. Although marred slightly by its made for TV pedigree, and by a truncated running time, *Long Dream* is a surprisingly evocative little film that makes you wonder why Higuchinsky hasn't directed a film since 2003.

Bonus features include a trio of interviews with Ito (who reveals that the film was inspired by the "concept where one rapidly reviews his entire life on the brink of death"), Shuui and Higuchinsky, a trailer, and a handful of chintzy promotional stills. With the exception of Higuchinsky's interview (could somebody please explain why his face is pixilated?), all of this is pretty forgettable, and doesn't serve much of a purpose beyond running out the clock.

Mike Sullivan

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www.thehotspotonline.com, a delirious Web site dedicated to "Bollywood (Indian)" and "Hollywood (Pakistan)" commercial cinema. Visitors to that site are confronted by all manner of film clips of excessive and hilarious Asian exoticia, with the average Pakistani film being represented as musicals featuring 300-pound-plus women who can transform themselves into werewolves to vanquish rapist bad guys. Hell's Ground recycles western elements, albeit with some local touches, while disregarding Pakistan's colorful film legacy.

Hell's Ground does address some national issues, such as poverty, water pollution, religious intolerance, and to this end, one of the film's addresses in an interview included on the DVD says the film is a direct response against her nation's popular, escapist cinema. Slickly produced and moderately entertaining, viewers should nonetheless be aware that the feature is little more than Blockbuster fare with subtitles...

HELL'S GROUND (aka Zibakhana)

Directed by Omar Khan

(2007) TLA Releasing DVD

The jungles of Pakistan have a lot in common with the rural American backwaters of seventies horror films, if Hell's Ground is to be believed. A quartet of young people from different backgrounds tells their parents they're off on a school trip as they motor off in a van to attend an underground rave/rock concert in the wilderness. The familiar characters are delineated with the expected stoner dude, the bad girl looking for a good time, the good girl who feels guilt over lying to her parents and the ineffectual hero. Stopping by a roadside stand they are warned by a crazy old man (Aja-Ul-Haqq, who played the vampire in 1967's *The Living Corpse*) that they are entering a cursed netherworld. In short order, they are attacked by flesh eating zombies, picked up a hitchhiker with a nasty secret in his backpack (in the manner of *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, 1974) before being introduced to a most dysfunction Muslim family... with a hefty retarded son who swings a mean battle mace and sports a burqa, the all concealing robe worn by women living in the more repressive Islamic nations, in an unique regional riff on the transvestite killers of yore.

Well photographed on digital video and treating all the timeworn clichés with reverent respect, Hell's Ground may disappoint many seasoned international horror film fans. The chief gripe about Hell's Ground encountered on many Internet message boards is that it's being promoted as a zombie film, when in fact the film's shuffling undead takes up but a fraction of the running time. Director Omar Khan seems content only to rehash American horror staples, instead of delving into Pakistan's vibrant cinematic culture. This is perplexing, as Khan runs

**THE BLUE EYES OF
THE BROKEN DOLL (1973)**

(Los Ojos Azules de la Muñeca Rota)
aka **HOUSE OF PSYCHOTIC WOMEN**
aka **HOUSE OF DOOM**
Directed by Leon Klimovsky

HUMAN BEASTS (1980)

(La Carnaval de las Bestias)
Directed by Jacinto Molina Alvarez
BCI/Demos DVD



The "Spanish Horror Collection" from BCI/Demos continues with two more Paul Naschy thrillers, again pairing a well-known title with a comparable obscurity (Leon Klimovsky's non-Naschy outing *The Dracula Saga*, reviewed last issue of *Scream* magazine, was released in tandem). Following their collaboration on *Horror Rises from the Tomb*, writer/star Paul Naschy (Jacinto Molina) and director Carlos Aured joined forces again for a tip of the hat to the Italian giallo shockers recently popularized by Dario Argento (*The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*, *The Cat o' Nine Tails*, etc.). *The Blue Eyes of the Broken Doll* casts Naschy as "Gilles," an ex-convict seeking to restart his life and hoping to find work in the town of Perrouze on the outskirts of France. While traditional employment eludes him, he is soon taken on as a handyman in the service of three sisters in an isolated mansion. As Gilles quickly learns, each of the sisters has a unique problem: Claude (Diana Lorys) is filled with self-loathing as a result of a disfiguring accident which has left her with an artificial hand; an unrelated incident has left Yvette (Maria Perschy) confined to a wheelchair; and Nicole (Eva Leon) is afflicted with nymphomania (which Gilles is only too happy to accommodate). But complications far more serious will soon affect this living arrangement. The sisters are all under the care of Dr. Labours (Eduardo Calvo), who prescribes a live-in nurse to further attend to their needs—but this nurse is brutally murdered before she even reaches the residence. Nor do the killings stop there. It is soon apparent that no young woman with blonde hair and blue eyes (targeted for graphic removal by the black-gloved killer) is safe. The townspeople immediately cast suspicion on Naschy's unwelcome outsider; the chief of police (Antonio Pica) is certain he's seen Gilles somewhere before; and Dr. Labours himself does his homework and discovers the traveler's true identity...

While explicit violence does, indeed, come to dominate the proceedings, Naschy and Aured build the narrative with considerable restraint, allowing full character development to complement the melancholy mood. The loneliness and need shared by Gilles and the three sisters thoroughly bonds them, and the viewer is encouraged to sympathize with them and wish them happiness even as their darker secrets are gradually exposed. But death haunts the characters throughout, striking a little closer to home every time: the first murder takes place completely offscreen, but each subsequent death draws the noose tighter and is depicted more shockingly than the last. Aured effectively riffs on his Italian inspirations with striking, authentic locations, a sinister musical motif (in this case, the children's song "Frère Jacques") and brutal, colorful splatter. And while the significance of the "blue eyes" of the title is readily apparent, not until the very end of the film do we learn the grisly secret of the "broken doll." While the script does contain a couple of too-convenient shortcuts, and while the strange soundtrack provided by Juan Carlos Calderon (*Vengeance of the Zombies*) takes a bit of getting used to for those new to Euro-horror, the quality of the characters, the performances and the direction raise *The Blue Eyes of the Broken Doll* amongst the best work of Naschy and Aured alike. In my earlier review of *Horror Rises from the Tomb*, I identified the Naschy/Aured feature commentary on the BCI DVD as the last collaboration of the two men (Aured passed away in 2007)—but I'm happy to report that they had granted us an extension with an additional talk devoted to this film. The two share vivid memories of the feature at hand, identifying the various locations as well as the lead and supporting players (including the ubiquitous Luis Ciges in a red-herring role)... and for the record, they heartily approve of Sam Sherman's unforgettable American title *House of Psychotic Women* (even though the accompanying ad campaign scarcely did justice to the picture). Only at one point does Naschy feel compelled to correct Aured: when the director remarks that such films were sold by concept and not by the value of the names on the marquee, Naschy (understandably) feels the need to defend the name he very much had made for himself by this time! (As before, subtitles are provided for the talk, which was moderated by Angel Gomez Rivero.) BCI's transfer of the film itself provides long-delayed satisfaction for those fans seeking the definitive version. Up until this point, the only decent available version was the long out-of-print Super Video VHS tape bearing the *House of Psychotic Women* moniker: all subsequent tape releases carried the same title but actually showcased the censored TV print which had originally aired as *House of Doom*. This TV version retained the violence as seen in the American theatrical release but removed the nudity (to more detrimental effect than was readily

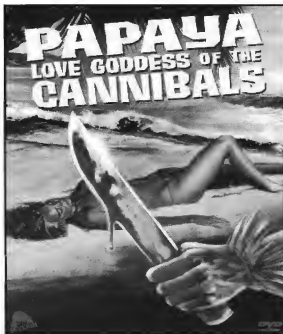
apparent). That said, even the R-rated theatrical version was nominally shorn of some sex and violence, but never at the expense of the story: the gory moments were slightly shortened but never removed in their entirety. (Well, the human-based gory moments, anyway—a graphic, one-hundred-percent real hog slaughter sequence was deleted from the Sherman print.) The fully uncut version of *The Blue Eyes of the Broken Doll* circulated on bootleg videocassettes for years, but the source print was heavily spiced, speckled and time-compressed, making it a completist's ordeal. Only now is the complete version available in eye-pleasing quality in both English and Spanish (with optional English subtitles, of course). One must note that the quality assessment comes with one caveat: the conversion process was less than perfect and occasionally calls attention to itself in the form of a slight "stuttering" effect during slow zooms, while the aforementioned commentary frequently gets ahead of the on-screen action, requiring the occasional "catch-up" pause—yet this remains such an improvement over past "uncut" releases that these flaws can easily be forgiven. The package includes another of Naschy's clever personal introductions, a theatrical trailer in English (misidentified as the U.S. trailer, but not actually the *House of Psychotic Women* spot), the Spanish credit sequence, the traditional gallery of stills and promotional material (this time out there are no alternate "clothed" takes although surely they must have existed for this of all films had they wished it to play in Spain!) and Mirek Lipinski's customarily thorough liner notes. *The Blue Eyes of the Broken Doll* is an unquestionable and essential highlight of the Paul Naschy collection. Far less-known to casual fans but receiving equal and much-needed attention is 1980's *Human Beasts*, written and directed by Naschy under his full name of Jacinto Molina Alvarez. Made just before *Night of the Werewolf* (previously issued by BCI), this represents Naschy's first Spanish-Japanese coproduction (Naschy's newly-founded Dalmata Films teamed with Japan's Hori Kikaku Productions). Naschy stars as Bruno, a mercenary hired by a Japanese crime ring to help them secure a fortune in stolen diamonds. Over the course of the mission, Bruno develops quite the personal relationship with his partner Meiko (Elko Nagashima)—to the point where Meiko's brother informs Bruno that he expects the wedding to take place immediately after the robbery! But it's all for naught—Bruno betrays his benefactors and flees with the diamonds. Ultimately tracked to Spain by his hires, Bruno kills every one of the—save for Meiko—but is badly wounded himself in the process. On the point of death, Bruno finds himself rescued by a friendly farm family, headed by Don Simon (Lautaro Murua). It's fortunate for Bruno that Don Simon is a medical doctor—but he's even happier with the competing attentions of his daughters Monica (Silvia Aguilar) and Alicia (Azucena

Hernandez). But lest Bruno think he's reached Paradise, Meiko is still hot on the vengeance trail, "hidden" sister Teresa (Julia Saly) appears to have sinister intentions of her own, and completely unbeknownst to Bruno, certain other parties who cross his new adoptive family have a nasty habit of falling prey to their flesh-eating hogs.

While horror and gore are, of course, present, *Human Beasts* lives up to its title far more satirically than gruesomely. Its depiction of mankind as almost universally greedy and treacherous gives us precious little to root for here. While it's certainly tempting to compare it to *The Blue Eyes of the Broken Doll* (which, in fact, used the very same mansion—long since demolished—for the bulk of the action) due to the special attention the ladies lavish on Naschy's character, one can hardly sympathize with a murderous lout such as Bruno. Even the "nicest" characters are up to no good (Meiko's certainly capable of love for her family and—so she thinks—for Bruno, but she's no less a criminal), and the film has plenty of them to introduce as the story builds to a repulsive, climactic costume party (Naschy gets as far as dressing up as Napoleon before changing his mind). Ricardo Palacios shows up as a boorish priest; and even the African maid (Roxana Dupre) who seems to have dignity and willpower above that of her charges is only too happy to revert to sadomasochistic stereotype in the privacy of Don Simón's bedroom (just try getting away with that in a contemporary American film). It may be easy to guess where *Human Beasts* is heading—but this isn't a film about guessing the ending. As the Spanish title (*The Beast's Carnival*) indicates, it's a guided tour of the worst of humanity.

As such, the film was an extremely difficult sell which garnered very little theatrical play worldwide. Surprisingly enough, however, it did manage to land on American video courtesy of All Seasons Entertainment. But for once, BCI has not supplied the English-dubbed version for their special edition of the film—and for that, we can all be thankful, as the All Seasons print of *Human Beasts* (distributed by Lorimar) featured a dubbing job that quite literally suggested that the TV was getting the picture from one channel and the sound from another. BCI offers the original Spanish-language version (with optional English subtitles, of course) exclusively. The widescreen framing notwithstanding, the only visual differences come in the form of the opening titles, which offer the full panorama of Peter Brueghel's horrific painting "The Triumph of Death," reduced to sketchy still frames in the All Seasons tape; and in the occasional use of Spanish subtitles for Japanese-language dialogue. Both versions feature the identical CAM library soundtrack, which makes extensive use of previously-recorded Ennio Morricone cues. But while *Human Beasts* offers no extra revelations in terms of content, the importance of the original Spanish-language soundtrack can't possibly be underestimated in its ability to convey this unique and perverted slice of unworthy life. Extras include another exclusive Naschy introduction, a Spanish theatrical trailer and, of course, the exhaustive still gallery and liner notes courtesy of Mirek Lipinski. And while there's nothing in the way of alternate footage for this title, the disc accommodates a special treat: the 23m short film *The Vampire*, directed by Alejandro Bailesteros and Antonio Curado. This adaptation of John Polidori's short story (yes, the one created on the same fateful night during which Mary Shelley conceived *Frankenstein*) tolines Naschy as "Lord Ruthven," who casts a fascination equally horrific and irresistible over young narrator Aubrey (Eugenio Gomez). It's a rich, enjoyable, shot-on-video production, although one must wonder exactly which vampire is being invoked with the strains of "Swan Lake" and the immortal line "I never drink... wine!" In short, one of Naschy's most "difficult" titles has finally been rendered far more accessible (and tempting) with this commendable effort.

Shaun M. Dallenmann



PAPAYA, LOVE GODDESS OF THE CANNIBALS

[Caribbean Papaya: Papaya dei Caraibi]

Directed by Joe D'Amato (Aristide Massaccesi)

(1978) Severin Films DVD

Melissa Chimenti (billed simply as 'Melissa') is Papaya, the curly, dark-haired enchanting seductress of Joe D'Amato's esoteric, lethargically-charged sleazefest. Opening on the luminous beaches of the Caribbean, Papaya doffs her top and idly strides around nude in the immaculately sunny sand before entering an off-the-way hut, surrounded by sizeable palm trees. Her tight bronze body soon presses itself up against an already naked male, as she slices open a piece of the fruit that bears her name, and places it on his erect genitalia (for what purpose, one can only assume to make it more palatable or for use as an aphrodisiac, though that doesn't seem to be needed). The two writhe around furiously, but it's not long before Papaya initiates fellatio on the male as composer Stelvio Cipriani's furious disco drumbeats pound energetically on the soundtrack. This sensual scenario reaches its climax in an unusual way, as Papaya bites down hard on his member (D'Amato's camera stying with the flinching male), resulting in an unbearably unpleasant castration before the opening credits have even commenced. An odd pair of mysterious Africans nod in acknowledgement to this supposed succubus, as Papaya leaves the hut in search of her next victim(s), allowing the duo to set the dilapidated structure afire with the painted male blazing to his death inside.

Papaya's unstated intentions and motives are left to the imagination for the time being, as we're introduced to geologist Vincent (Maurice Poli, also seen in Mario Bava's *Five Dolls for an August Moon* and *Raid Dogs*) and his blonde-haired lover, Sara (played by Finnish beauty Sirpa Lane, of Walerian Borowczyk's notorious *The Beast*). The spark between the two is renewed, puzzlingly, during a cruel cockfight (D'Amato providing some tame, but real footage of an actual bout), with Sara coldheartedly edging on the brutal battle perhaps being a none-too-subtle way of D'Amato foreshadowing her yet-unseen side of duplicity. In no time, the two are caressing each other's bare bodies in the shower, humping like mad, and agreeing to do some exploration of their own in this stunningly scenic, but alien environment.

THE MAN WHO COULD CHEAT DEATH

Directed by Terence Fisher

(1945) Legend Films/Paramount Pictures DVD

Vincent is in town to preside over the building of a nuclear reactor that will result in a permanent move for the locals (including Papaya); Sara questions the moral implications of his job requirement, but he forges onward in the name of American Imperialism anyway, almost laughing it up while not realizing the ramifications his actions will have for the natives. The two come across Papaya on one of their island adventures, setting in motion a sexualized, ill-advised pattern that has each member of this temporary ménage a trois questioning their previous beliefs and associations. Vincent falls for Papaya, and Papaya for Sara, with Papaya sleeping with both as she works her destructive, deathly magic on Vincent. As for Sara, it's momentarily tough to suss out exactly if she has designs for Papaya, as her bitter tryst with one of the native African men from the opening scene is either in earnest or in order to make the dark beauty furiously jealous (if it's the latter, it works). At first, Sara and Vincent's bond seems unbreakable, the two fascinated yet repulsed by an ancient pagan ritual known as The Roundstone, a fiesta that devolves into an orgy with blood. Surely an attempt to frighten the two away from the area, and thus preventing the reactor, the local's feeble attempt fails and only serves to awaken the two's (mainly Sara's) perverse, irrational desires. Papaya then turns on the heat to dispose of Vincent, with Sara increasingly suspicious (or envious, as the ambiguous case may be).

D'Amato closes on a déjà vu note—Sara en route with Vincent's replacement, picking up hitchhiking Papaya in the same roadside manner as she did with her former companion, a playful dialogue exchange regarding Papaya's uncommon name taking on a now-sinister connotation—as Cipriani's percussive score, surely the most inventive contribution to the picture, erupts once again. D'Amato's finale suggests that the two sexually frenzied women have been ill at odds with their lifestyles for some time, and have only found solace in one another's lustful company. Finding serenity with each other, they can now comfortably seduce any potential menace (read: men) who poses a threat—involved with the building of a nuclear reactor or otherwise—to their removed-from-civilization, idyllic existence. Sara has adopted Papaya's tribal stance, and the two have forged an unspoken, primal union.

D'Amato, a lesser artist oftentimes lazily compared to the superior Jess Franco for the simple reasoning that both have handled similar Sapphic subject matter in careers that have spanned upwards of 400 films each, is a competent, if indifferent artisan. His pictorial treatment of the various exotic locales (*Erotic Nights of the Living Dead*, *Porno Holocaust*) is merely serviceable at best, and crudely ineffectual at worst. Papaya attempts to get by on its plethora of naked bodies wriggling around in this striking milieu (filmed in the Dominican Republic), with no great artistic temperament attempting to tease out the more fascinating, subversive elements of the plot described above. Still, Sirpa Lane and Chimerini are gorgeous creatures to behold for 86 minutes, and Cipriani's aural accompaniment, as previously mentioned, is a delectable slice of pumping disco.

Close scrutiny bears out that the film contains an abject view of Capitalist tendencies in the character of Vincent, but this surely didn't intrigue D'Amato enough to this subtext much more than a rote, uninformed criticism (he would no doubt state himself that he only made the movie for the money, as he confessed multiple times over his other work). Papaya remains an unremarkable, if typical entry in D'Amato's decades spanning career (his cinematic chapter closing with his death in 1999), but, early on, there's an apt metaphor for D'Amato's mutant mélange of sensationalized sexual liaisons and generous sprinklings of gratuitous gore. After her first bedside encounter with Vincent, Sara casually opens a curtain to discover the charred body of Papaya's unlucky castrate victim. Sex and Death residing side-by-side—in the same room, in the same film—unknowningly and unbearably close. What really interests D'Amato is this uneasy juxtaposition: sex and guts between the cannibals and the Capitalists.

Severin's DVD unearths this once hard-to-find picture, but provides no frills in the extras department save for a theatrical trailer with the alternate title *Caribbean Papaya*. The transfer, however, is impeccable, with minimal print damage. It's presented in anamorphic 1.85:1.

In 1957, the complexion of classic cinematic horror was permanently altered by screenwriter Jimmy Sangster and director Terence Fisher, who cast Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee as doctor and Monster, respectively, in Hammer Films' *The Curse of Frankenstein*—and who followed through with the same combination in 1958's *Dracula* (or *Horror of Dracula* in the U.S.). But before the quartet would fully reunite for their take on *The Mummy* in 1959, there were two additional full-color Hammer thrillers to reckon with that same year. Sangster sat out *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (adapted by Peter Bryan with Fisher directing a top-notch Cushing as Sherlock Holmes and highlighting Lee as would-be-victim Sir Henry), while Cushing took a breather on Sangster's take on Barre Lyndon's play *The Man in Half Moon Street* (previously filmed under that title in 1945), here freshly rechristened *The Man Who Could Cheat Death*.

This latter title has been one of the hardest for Stateside Hammer fans to see since the dawn of the video age—once its TV playdates dried up, it remained stubbornly absent from VHS and laserdisc even as other Hammer titles sold well in various formats—often in restored editions. But given its status as a 'minor' Hammer title, and without the selling point of Lee or Cushing in a lead role, demand for *The Man Who Could Cheat Death* has only now been answered by Legend Films/Paramount Pictures with a handsome, no-frills DVD (which, ironically, ended up serving as an immediate memorial for recently departed co-star Hazel Court). Anton Diffring takes the lead as Dr. Georges Bonnet—medical genius, gifted sculptor . . . and a man with a secret. While politely hosting a party and unveiling his latest creation, he's anxiously awaiting the arrival of long-time colleague Ludwig Weiss (Arnold Marle), with whom he discovered no less than the key to eternal life and youth. But only Bonnet has taken advantage of the secret—Weiss (the only man who can perform the glandular operation required every few decades) has allowed himself to age naturally and is in no condition to operate. A desperate Bonnet must find a replacement surgeon immediately—as we soon find out, time has a way of catching up with him if a single treatment is missed . . . The aforementioned Hazel Court takes the female lead as Janine Dubois—Bonnet's newest model, while Christopher Lee is cast as Pierre Gerard, surgeon, potential lifesaver . . . and rival for Janine's affections. And when professional ethics (to put it mildly) put the completion of the operation in jeopardy, Bonnet has no trouble using Janine to get what he wants from Gerard. *TMWCCD* is as handsomely produced and well-acted as one might expect, and the lovely image of Ms. Court is smashingly preserved here for her fans (her hotly-rumored fleeting nude scene, supposedly a European exclusive, does not make a surprise appearance here, in case you were wondering). Diffring and Marle play off of each other quite well as the old (to put it mildly) friends, and Lee is professional and dignified in a role that really doesn't give him much to do (not even he can convince anatomically-aware viewers that a 'parathyroid' operation would somehow require an abdominal incision in the film's most notorious gaffe). In the end, though, the film retains its lesser reputation by remaining as essentially stagebound as its inspiration. The emphasis remains on dialogue, while both the action and the special-effects makeup work are minimal. Unlike Fisher's cinematic interpretations of *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, and *Hound*, *TMWCCD* never bursts its boundaries and demands to be recognized as a movie, nor does it ever deliver the thrills of its predecessors. (It could have been done—and one could argue that Richard Matheson did just that with his Kolchak TV-sequel *The Night Strangler*, which took a nearly-identical premise all over (and under) Seattle!) Nevertheless, Hammer completists should be grateful the film is available at last. As mentioned, there are no extras on the DVD (not even a trailer), but the film, much as its protagonist, has kept well and is served up in its original 1.66:1 widescreen format with no unnecessary tweaking of the mono soundtrack.

KILLER'S MOON

Directed by Alan Birkenshaw
1978 Redemption Films DVD

Viewers going into *Killer's Moon* were justly warned by the film's "original X-rated trailer," thoughtfully included on the Redemption DVD: "When minds are taken over, the results aren't always the fun that people imagine." A troupe of teenage songbirds is forced to spend the night in a gloomy hotel after their bus breaks down one night in England's rural Lake District. As the girls trill "Greensleeves" dressed in their full-length flannel nightgowns (one of whom clutches a yellow teddy bear to her putative breasts) under the benevolent hand of their stern headmistress, a quartet of crazies undergoing "dream therapy," i.e. fed hallucinogenic drugs and encouraged to act out their basest fantasies, escape from a nearby cottage clinic. Dressed in hospital whites and sporting bowler hats, in a nod to *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), the mad klugs engage the lassies in an evening of rape and murder, because as the sonorous narration in the aforementioned trailer tells us, "You'll keep praying the terror will stop. But these men can't stop; they have to go on, because they think it's part of their treatment." It's all up to a heroic three-legged dog to save the day. "Poor dog. Thanks for saving our lives!"

Competently acted and carefully produced on a shoestring budget, *Killer's Moon* is a sterling example of how a bad script can defeat the noblest of intentions. The film's premise is showprow and cliché, there's long stretches of excruciating tedium in between the bouts of infrequent violence and glaring inconsistencies abound. While the audience is expected to worry about the fate of the girls at the hands of the maniacs, one character is spared any of the foregoing unpleasantness by fainting dead away at the first sign of danger.

The film's camp status rests on some especially ripe dialogue. In the most notorious exchange, a girl counsels an assault victim with these comforting words, "Look, you were only raped. As long as you don't tell anyone about it, you'll be alright. You pretend it never happened, I'll pretend I never saw it. If we get out of this alive, maybe we'll both live to be wives and mothers."

This writer first encountered *Killer's Moon* on a gray market DVD-R and was suitably dumbstruck. Along with the weebegone shot-on-video invitation to *Hell* (1962), *Killer's Moon* ranks right down there as one of the worst British horror films ever. Unmentioned in many reference books, the film became one of the first of many "video nasties" in the United Kingdom during the early eighties.

The Redemption DVD features an on-camera interview with director Alan Birkenshaw, who took on the challenge of helming a horror feature after finding success with his exploitation title *The Tit* (aka *Confessions of a Sex Maniac*, 1974). Birkenshaw would go on to bore audiences with such direct-to-video drack such as *Masque of the Red Death* (1990) and *The House of Usher* (1988). There's also an interview with actress Joanne Good, who has pleasant memories of the shoot. The DVD contains two trailers, along with a color and black and white stills gallery.

Greg Goodsell



ICONS OF ADVENTURE

THE PIRATES OF BLOOD RIVER (1962)
Directed by John Gilling
THE DEVIL-SHIP PIRATES (1964)
Directed by Don Sharp
THE STRANGLERS OF BOMBAY (1960)
Directed by Terence Fisher
THE TERROR OF THE TONGS (1961)
Directed by Anthony Bushell
Columbia/Sony DVD

While not actually advertised as a Hammer collection, Columbia/Sony's *Icons of Adventure* two-disc set is a gathering of four of the studio's non-horror thrillers from the 1960s, including three Christopher Lee vehicles scripted by Jimmy Sangster and a rarely-seen black-and-white offering from director Terence Fisher.

The first of the two-sided discs presents the latter films in the series so as to open with the two most colorful items on display—both of Hammer's pirate outings. From director John Gilling (*The Plague of the Zombies*; *The Reptile*) comes *The Pirates of Blood River*, top-lining Kerwin "Sinbad" Matthews as Jonathon Standing, one of a band of French refugees (the Huguenots) seeking peace in an isolated settlement. His illicit affair with the wife of a town elder (Marie Devereux)—not to mention her subsequent demise at the jaws of ravenous prairie—gets him in hot water with said elders, led by his own father (Andrew Keir as Jason Standing), and he finds himself condemned to slow, certain death in a vile penal colony. Escaping his fate, Jonathon finds himself face to face with a band of pirates led by Christopher Lee as Captain LaRoche, and naively allows himself to be persuaded that they may be just the men to replace religious tyranny with law and order in the settlement. Such, of course, is not the case. LaRoche and his men proceed to terrorize the town, driven by the promise of a treasure withheld by Jason—and it's up to Jonathon to rally the population, and end the settlement of their latest oppressors.

The movie delivers on its promise of swashbuckling action (even with one useless arm, LaRoche is able to indulge Lee's considerable fencing prowess, and there's a terrific "blindfold" duel), and the rogues gallery contains such familiar faces as Hammer stalwart Michael Ripper and the great Oliver Reed. And while this is by no means a horror film, Sangster's script invokes themes quite familiar to fans of Hammer's Gothic output—while there is every reason to do away with such threats as pirates (or vampires), those who invoke the authority of the Almighty and presume to speak for him can be equally dangerous (witness the zealous Jason as he allows his charges to be systematically slaughtered rather than compromise his principles—to him, everything is "God's judgment." The theme would reach its zenith in Hammer's 1971 shocker *Twins of Evil*). Also noteworthy is the grisly (for the time) piranha sequence—as Sangster and art director Don Mingaye note in their feature commentary (moderated by historian Marcus Hearn), we're given the full "X" certificate version of the scene as opposed to what played in the sanitized general release. It's all such good fun that it takes a while to realize that this pirate movie doesn't contain a single seafaring moment! *The Pirates of Blood River* is beautifully presented in its full 2:35:1 Hammerscope ratio. In contrast to the previous entry, 1964's *The Devil-Ship Pirates*, directed by Don Sharp (*Kiss of the Vampire*) actually does begin with a sea battle (partially stock footage, yes, but there really is a ship to be seen this time). Here, Lee is Captain Robeles, reluctantly recruited by the Spanish Armada to battle the British fleet in the year 1588. Realizing that his ship (the *Diablo*, of course) has no chance of surviving the current skirmish, Robeles decides to retreat—much to the chagrin of the officer in charge, whom he quickly dispatches. Robeles is far happier to commandeer an English vessel while his ship is undergoing repairs—all he has to do is convince them that the British have been defeated by the Armada and that he and his crew are unconditionally in charge. Michael Ripper is again at Lee's side, and Andrew Keir returns in a more sympathetic village role this time around. While not an ideal double bill with *The Pirates of Blood River* (due to unavoidable familiarity as the story draws to a similar upping),



widespread (yet secret) cult of Kali worshippers (the Thuggees, or 'Thugs' for short) are seeing to it that the intruders disappear in disturbing numbers. Stranger Harry Lewis (Guy Rolfe, Mr. Sardonicus himself) takes it upon himself to expose and deal with the cult—particularly when his Indian servant Ram Das is added to the list of victims. Frustrated at the lack of support of his own company, he resigns his commission—but the hunt goes on. The Thugs (introduced to a wide cinematic audience via the Cary Grant classic *Gunga Din*) are a fearsome bunch indeed—George Pastell, in particular, offers a zesty, enthusiastic performance as the bald, muscular High Priest of Kali, seen training initiates in the art of deception and murder (via the 'sacred scarves' alluded to in the film's title), carrying out life-and-death rituals (with a sense of true devotion and honor—when he believes Kali has instructed him to free his helpless nemesis, he does just that) and, of course, making the most of the final physical showdown. By contrast, Roger Delgado (best known as "The Master" in subsequent *Doctor Who* serials), is a far less convincing Indian, though he's game to take on the role. But Kali's followers aren't all nearly that obvious—as the film progresses, we see just how thoroughly they've infiltrated their opposition. The Strangers of Bombay has a reputation for being one of Hammer's grisliest thrillers, but most of this is left to the imagination ("Slit their stomachs, so their bodies do not swell and reveal their secret graves!") One severed body part tossed through a window as a warning and one Kali devotee who eagerly throws himself headfirst into his own noose rather than allow the British executioners to have their way with him more than suffice to get the point across. The film's major drawback was the decision to film in black and white—perhaps it was the example of *Gunga Din*, or perhaps it was a deliberate attempt to tone down the gruesome material, but when one witnesses what Hammer was doing with color in those days, "what might have been" becomes a serious consideration. Screenwriter David Z. Goodman (who went on to write *Straw Dogs* for Sam Peckinpah) doesn't see it that way—in his solo feature commentary, he chides himself for "over-writing" the film (which he acknowledges he hasn't seen in 47 years) and complains about the lack of actual physical action (Fisher did beef up the proceedings a bit by inserting a mongoose/cobra duel, among other things, and this was with Goodman's blessing). Nor was he his own worst critic, as we'll see. Naturally, he's a bit hard on himself—his pulp thriller delivers the goods, and Fisher allows suspense and drama to build up appropriately to the fiery finale. Though not as colorful as it could have been, *The Strangers of Bombay* (again in perfect 2:35:1 framing) is a welcome addition to the Hammer DVD library. While Goodman was probably not aware of this, the British Board of Film Censors saw things his way in criticizing (not that that was supposed to be their job) *Strangers*. In a memo to the makers of Hammer's next 'exotic' thriller, they specified that they let *Strangers* get away with



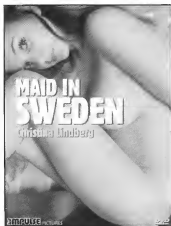
murder—partially because it was in black and white, but mainly because the film was so dull and dreary that nobody was likely to care (as noted, I respectfully disagree). But they were lying in wait for director Anthony Bushell's *The Terror of the Tongs*—it was in full color and offered mayhem, murder and "spiffing fight scenes!" Nevertheless, there are dagger and hatchet murders aplenty in 1910 Hong Kong as merchant captain Jackson Sale (Geoffrey Toone) inadvertently finds himself in unwitting possession of a document that threatens to compromise the ruthless Red Dragon Tong (led by Christopher Lee as Chung King). Things get personal when Sale's teenage daughter Helena (the decidedly non-teenage Barbara Brown) falls victim to the Tong—and as in the previous film, the forces of law and order are unequipped to deal with the secret society, making personal vengeance the only option. Poor Roger Delgado (again the right-hand man of the leading villain) looks even less comfortable in Asian getup than he did as an Indian, French actress Yvonne Monlaur (*The Brides of Dracula*) is even more out of place as the Chinese love interest Lee (no relation to Christopher!), and one of the few genuine Chinese actors (Burt "Kato" Kwouk) is knocked off in the early going ("I didn't cast it—I only wrote it," says

The Devil-Ship Pirates serves up plenty of highlights of its own—in particular the Diabolic itself, a Spanish galleon specially constructed for the film (returning commentators Sangster and Mingaye share the headaches it wrought, though it was well worth the trouble. The action is again rousing, especially the climactic duel (Lee got to use both of his arms this time out, for one thing), and the package is served up in another splendid Hammerscope transfer. Though the commentary participants are getting up there in years, they still have plenty of stories to share, and Heam is expert at bridging memory gaps and providing valuable supplemental information. Disc One extras include Chapter One of the vintage serial *The Great Adventures of Captain Kidd* (still not released on video in its entirety, so something of a tease) and the pirate-themed cartoon *Merry Mutineers*. Disc Two kicks off with *The Strangers of Bombay*, up till now one of the rarest Hammer releases to catch on these shores. The story takes place as British Colonial rule and industry has made inroads in the form of the East India Company. Trade business may be booming, but certain natives are not pleased with the change of command—in particular, the



murder—partially because it was in black and white, but mainly because the film was so dull and dreary that nobody was likely to care (as noted, I respectfully disagree). But they were lying in wait for director Anthony Bushell's *The Terror of the Tongs*—it was in full color and offered mayhem, murder and "spiffing fight scenes!" Nevertheless, there are dagger and hatchet murders aplenty in 1910 Hong Kong as merchant captain Jackson Sale (Geoffrey Toone) inadvertently finds himself in unwitting possession of a document that threatens to compromise the ruthless Red Dragon Tong (led by Christopher Lee as Chung King). Things get personal when Sale's teenage daughter Helena (the decidedly non-teenage Barbara Brown) falls victim to the Tong—and as in the previous film, the forces of law and order are unequipped to deal with the secret society, making personal vengeance the only option. Poor Roger Delgado (again the right-hand man of the leading villain) looks even less comfortable in Asian getup than he did as an Indian, French actress Yvonne Monlaur (*The Brides of Dracula*) is even more out of place as the Chinese love interest Lee (no relation to Christopher!), and one of the few genuine Chinese actors (Burt "Kato" Kwouk) is knocked off in the early going ("I didn't cast it—I only wrote it," says

Jimmy Sangster). On the other hand, Marne Maitland (another *Strangers* holdover) is decent as the beggar who hides his role as the leader of the Tong resistance faction. In the end, though, only Christopher Lee gets away with it—mainly by virtue of being Christopher Lee (his role here undoubtedly inspired producer Harry Alan Towers to cast him as Fu Manchu in his own four-film series). One can scarcely discuss *The Terror of the Tongs* today without raising the specter of "political correctness," but the fact remains that African cannibals, Indian Thugs and Chinese Tongs were staples of the perils faced by white intruders in countless pulp adventures—they represented the deadly dangers that counterbalanced the wonders and attractions of worlds beyond the reach of most readers and viewers. The intent of such films was not to offend, but simply to thrill. *The Terror of the Tongs* wouldn't be made today, but in 1961, it was. And it's here where it belongs—in a collection of adventure films from the 1960s! Marcus Heam returns to moderate another Jimmy Sangster feature commentary—here joined by (uncredited) assistant editor Chris Barnes. As both men were heavily involved with Hammer Studios, Heam takes advantage of the opportunity by encouraging reminiscences of significantly more Hammer history than the film at hand (which still, of course, gets its due), making this the best track of the bunch. The one non-scope film in the collection is presented in its original 1.66:1 ratio and in full color (this did play in a black and white version in America, which did it no favors). In addition to trailers for these and unrelated Columbia titles, Disc Two offers up the 1935 Andy Clyde two-reeler *Hot Paprika* (from Jules White, the man who brought you the Three Stooges shorts), which offers an "island revolution" theme as its sole connection to the set. The extras may be tenuous, but by now, the collection has everything but a newsreel with which to assemble a perfect old-fashioned movie night—on top of a much-appreciated concentrated slice of Hammer's non-horror output.



MAID IN SWEDEN

Directed by Dan Wolman

(1971) Impulse Pictures DVD

Sweet and innocent 16-year-old country girl Inga (the delectable Christina Lindberg of *Thriller: A Cruel Picture* fame, in her film debut) goes to the city to spend the weekend with her older, more worldly sister Greta (Monica Ekman) and her cad boyfriend Casten (the supremely jerky Krister Ekman). Naturally, Inga gets in touch with her budding sexuality, loosens up, and learns the joys of booze, dancing, and intercourse. Casten's equally loutish friend Bjorn (homely beanpole Leif Naeslund) forces himself on Inga on their first date, but she falls head over heels for the creep anyway! Of course, when Inga decides to take a bath one fateful day, Casten can't help but join the luscious lass for some splashy carnal fun (can anyone blame the guy?).

Director Dan Wolman relates the sordid coming-of-age story at a steady pace and delivers plenty of nudity and arousing soft-core sex scenes. The central plot clearly imitates Joe Sarno's exploitation classic *Inga*. (Ironically, Lindberg went on to appear in the Sarno flicks *Swedish Wildcats* and *Young Playthings*.) Not surprisingly, Wolman shows off Lindberg's abundant physical attributes as often as possible. Christina disrobes with pleasing regularity, masturbates in bed after catching Greta and Bjorn making love; cools off with a steamy shower (shot in sensuous slow motion for extra erotic effect); and performs her sizzling sex scenes with scorching lusty abandon. Moreover, Hasse Welin's pretty cinematography leers over Christina's daisy chasms with undisguised lascivious intent, while the catchy soundtrack boasts plenty of tuneful folksy rock songs. Lindberg delivers a touching and natural performance in her first lead role. The Impulse Pictures DVD offers a drab fullscreen presentation that's clearly transferred from a grainy, washed-out VHS print source. The extras are the battered theatrical trailer and a strictly so-so recent interview with Christina (who still looks awful cute in her late 50's).

Joe Wargyniak

[.REC]

(2007) Directed by Jaume Balagueró and Paco Plaza
Fimmax DVD (region 2)



Now that the dust has settled on last year's handi-cam fright-fest *Cloverfield*, audiences being divided on that monster movie's band of over-privileged brothers and attempted cathartic release from 9/11 imagery, Spain's aesthetically similar, but much more satisfying, jittery shock-suspense take on zombie movie conventions will soon hit North America with a vengeance (an Americanized remake from Sony and a sequel to the original are already planned). Directors Balagueró (*Darkness*) and newcomer Plaza take what's come before in the faux documentary subgenre (*Cannibal Holocaust*, *The Blair Witch Project*, Romero's recent *Diary of the Dead*), movies that almost must legally be uttered in the same breath when discussing *[.REC]*, and build on them by ambiguously lashing out details, holding back on definitive answers as to the central conceit, but suggesting so much in the hazy, barely illuminated darkness.

Angela (Manuela Velasco) is a fresh-faced, but resolute television reporter for a nightly program entitled "While You Sleep." Her (unseen, for the entire picture) camera operator follows her every move as they fastidiously follow around firefighters in a quiet off night at the station. Angela shamelessly admits that she hopes an emergency will come in to break up the monotony, but the firefighters assure her that most of their duties comprise of rescuing animals from trees and opening locks for people who've lost their keys. When the call comes in that there's an old lady trapped in her apartment building, Angela races with the men to the rescue, glad to be going out on a call rather than staving off boredom. From their few steps inside the building, the reporters and men encounter a collection of terrified tenement residents wracking their brain over the erratic woman upstairs; the men search the room, Angela closely behind, and they find the clearly sick woman in tattered, bloody underwear. She leaps forth, attacking an unlucky police officer. The rest—Angela in tow—race downstairs, forced to come to grips with what's upstairs as they're confounded by being beat locked inside by the outside police force: a quarantine has been issued for the area. As if for punctuation, the bitten man's body falls several stories to his death, landing in the downstairs general area, frightening us and the people contained in the narrative. A mother and daughter are amongst the tenants, and the daughter's flu-like symptoms may be part of the supposed spreading infection, much to the consternation of everyone else gathered around. Our immediate concerns are with Angela and her cameramen, and it's left to them to investigate the strange dwellings of the mysterious "Man from Madrid," the caretaker who's been missing for several months. With their tape still rolling for posterity, the duo come across newspaper headlines stitched to the wall, including an expose on a Vatican cover-up regarding the exorcism of a young girl (whether she was actually possessed is never made clear, a bright idea by the young filmmakers to keep the externalized reasoning vague). A demented, painfully thin creature begins to lurk about in their presence, knocking out their one camera-light, and the two are left to make its acquaintance in the closing, fearsome minutes.

While *[.REC]* is less poetic or mythic than *Diary of the Dead*, the two nonetheless share a common bond in the deployment of first-person perspective. The justification for keeping a camera going on at such a frantic and dangerous time is dealt with by having the characters realize that the recording will hold importance for others (furthermore, it would be a ratings bonanza for the sure-to-be career conscious Angela). The compulsive, constant taping of this harrowing experience may also be the only likely reason that filmmakers can come up with for their characters, as we've seen it used in *Diary* and the dissimilar story-wise *Cloverfield*. *[.REC]*'s suspenseful set-pieces elaborate on possible cinematic clichés (the Man from Madrid's voice on a scratchy tape recorder, a la *Evil Dead II*; the possessed girl), but the film's real antecedents may be video games like the *Resident Evil* series, where scare-tactics and split-second shocks are employed to the extreme.

The DVD contains a (Spanish-speaking) audio commentary track with the filmmakers, a 40-minute making-of, and the craftily assembled teaser, trailers and TV spots (instead of giving up the goods with shots of the film, the spots are focused on freaked-out, nail-biting audience members). The transfer is immaculate, with the intimate nature of the film making it prime for home video viewing.

Aaron Graham

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WEREWOLF SHADOW (1970)

La Noche de Walpurgis
aka **THE WEREWOLF VS.
THE VAMPIRE WOMAN**
aka **BLOOD MOON**
Directed by Leon Klimovsky

CURSE OF THE DEVIL (1973)

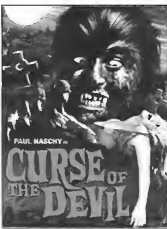
El Retorno de Walpurgis
Directed by Carlos Aured
BCI/Deimos DVD

BCI/Deimos concludes their "Paul Naschy Collection" (say it ain't so!)—not with previously unreleased titles but with improved reissues of two films previously handled by Anchor Bay. My original Fangoria articles listed the film best known as *The Werewolf Vs. the Vampire Woman* as the fourth entry in Naschy's Waldemar Daninsky werewolf series—it was actually the fifth, following 1970's *The Fury of the Wolfman* (which showed up on these shores significantly later, bearing a 1971 copyright date. The uncut release sold as *Werewolf Shadow* actually bears the Spanish language title "La Noche de Walpurgis," invoking the legendary night in which evil is allowed to walk freely on Earth once per year. Under any title, it was the film which secured Naschy's reputation as an international horror star and heir to the throne of Lon Chaney, Jr. The specifics need little recounting by now: Elvira (Gaby Fuchs) and Genevieve (Barbara Capell) are two young women on an expedition to discover the tomb of the infamous Wanda de Nadassy (inspired by the legend of Elizabeth Bathory). Unfortunately for them, they inadvertently resurrect the Blood Countess herself (Patty Shepard)—and their only protection comes in the form of the similarly-revived Waldemar, stalwart hero by day, throat-ripping lycanthrope by night. The combination of sex, gore, monsters, action and Gothic atmosphere made this a crowd-pleaser wherever it played: and it's worth mentioning that this was the first Naschy werewolf film to play to American viewers as a werewolf film (as opposed to the rather distracting Stateside debut of Waldemar's first adventure as *Frankenstein's Bloody Terror*). The *Werewolf Shadow* release contains footage excised from *The Werewolf Vs. the Vampire Woman*—including some smatterings of nudity and gore as well as some expositional material—however, it must be noted that there are plenty of Stateside fans who prefer *The Werewolf Vs. the Vampire Woman* for its quicker pacing and a selection of traditional library music which, frankly, fits the onscreen action more comfortably than did the original score by Anton Garcia Abril. Nevertheless, both versions have earned the right to be seen. To that end, BCI has re-issued the *Werewolf Shadow* cut as originally released by Anchor Bay as part of a "Special Edition" which also includes *The Werewolf Vs. the Vampire Woman* (available from countless public-domain labels). And therein lies the rub. While this new disc certainly offers everything that Anchor Bay previously served up as far as the European cut is concerned, their print of the American version (though nicely letterboxed) suffers from a substandard presentation.



film known in the U.S. as *Curse of the Devil* went out to Spanish-speaking territories as "The Return of Walpurgis." The connection becomes immediately apparent in the prologue which depicts Waldemar's Medieval ancestor dispatching the various members of the Satanic Bathory clan—but the curse they bestow upon his line eventually visits itself upon titled nobleman Waldemar when he (in classic Universal fashion) innocently guns down the son of a Gypsy family with a silver bullet—having encountered him in wolf form. Tragically unaware of what he has become once the gypsies bestow the curse (via the first truly pleasurable human relationship he has ever known), Waldemar ravages the township, with the efforts of his family and friends to protect him amounting to naught.

As indicated by the American title, *Curse of the Devil* was pitched as an *Exorcist* cash-in Stateside, but regardless of its guise, *El Retorno de Walpurgis* actually serves up the quintessential Waldemar Daninsky Gothic, boasting rich atmosphere, equally copious amounts of bloodshed and eroticism, and what is probably the best werewolf makeup the series has to offer. BCI goes Anchor Bay one better by providing the uncut film in both the original Spanish language (with optional English subtitles) and the familiar English-language dub. They don't have Anchor Bay's exclusive Naschy interview, but the supplements on the other items in the BCI Naschy series more than make up for this. Neither *Werewolf Shadow* nor *Curse of the Devil* feature the full gamut of BCI attractions (original negative transfers, Naschy introductions, alternate footage & credit sequences, etc.) but the generous still gallery and the Mirek Lipinski liner notes are, of course, on hand to complete the package in the tradition of the collection. It is regrettable that Naschy and Carlos Aured could not team for a feature commentary on this, their third collaboration—and now the opportunity is gone forever. Even more frustrating is the absence of their fourth and final team-up, *The Mummy's Revenge*, from this collection (if any Naschy film needed the BCI treatment, it would be this one). However, patient fans have been amply rewarded with the truly monumental lineup thus far available—and if the proper appreciation and encouragement are shown, the potential may yet be there...



Shane M. Dallenmann



KISS LOVES YOU

Directed by Jim Heneghan
(2007) Music Video Distributors DVD

It's always interesting to peek in on the lives of fanatics, (from a safe distance, of course) just to see what makes them tick. KISS fans are no exception. Their unconditional love gets tested in director Jim Heneghan's clever documentary *KISS Loves You*. Shot within a ten year span (1994-2004), the viewer learns that the KISS Army are just as entertaining as their make-up mentors.

First, we are introduced to Bill Baker—a former Ace Frehley wannabe, who became friends with the KISS guitarist (well, at least in Bill's mind he did!) since he met Ace on a few occasions. When the dynamic duo of Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley decide to cash in on an original members reunion, Baker desperately tries to get in touch with Ace via phone (we could only imagine how many messages were left on Frehley's answering machine). Shockingly, Ace didn't get back in touch with his new best friend. However, Bill got his revenge by attending a reunion show, and threw a sweat-drenched towel at his former idol while Ace was on stage. Nowadays, Bill puts all his energy into worshipping Elvis Presley. At least dead rockers can't ignore your calls.

Bill isn't much unlike the hordes of outcasts that attend KISS conventions. Many of them show up in full KISS attire, but none of the faithful flock are as pathetic as the Ventrice family. Mom and Pop Ventrice hope to meet Gene and Paul. They force their four year old son to wear Paul KISS make-up, since they know the "Star Child" loves kids. In the words of Mrs. Ventrice, "Once Paul sees Anthony Jr., we're in!" While on stage, Paul receives the plaque from the young hostage which reads "To Paul Stanley, you are my idol, I'm only four years old and I love KISS, I love you—your friend & fan, Anthony Jr. Dentrice." (Even the poor kid's last name is misspelled on the plaque). To his credit, Paul shows the plaque to a KISS Con crowd, then tosses it on the soundboard.

Rewind to a few months earlier . . . we see Gene and Paul raid an unofficial KISS convention in Troy, Michigan retrieving KISS apparel that was stolen from a storage facility several years ago. Simmons sees fit to (barely) recognize the astonished crowd, then he and Paul swiftly leave to catch a plane.

At first, KISS conventions were run for fans and by fans. But that came to a quick halt once Simmons and Stanley realized that these shows were bringing in a good amount of money. Sure enough, officially sanctioned KISS Cons (\$100 a pop for a ticket) replaced the fan-based shows quicker than you could say "Tommy, can you hear me."

Several KISS cover bands such as Cold Gin, Hotter Than Hell, Strutter, and Black Diamond have internal feuds. As we learn, even knock-off groups switch band members. It's all a bit mind numbing.

Interspersed throughout the film, we see rockers Handsome Dick Manitoba (The Dictators), Jerry Only (Misfits), and Dee Snider (Twisted Sister), throw in their two cents about the hottest band in the land.

DVD Extras included on *KISS Loves You* are plentiful. There are 90 minutes worth of outtakes (the documentary itself runs 73 minutes!). Film from a 1976 KISS concert in Stockholm is seen (but not heard—it's silent footage from Super 8); the band's reunion tour press conference is shown, as is the complete KISS Spectacular Program from the public access show *Beyond Vaudeville* (formally known as MTV's *Oddville*). With tongue planted firmly in cheek, this DVD comes highly recommended.

Darrell Mayeski

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BOARDINGHOUSE

Directed by John Wintergate
(1982) Code Red DVD



Businessman and freeform spiritualist Jim Royce (director, producer, scripter, whatever John Wintergate under the nom-de-plume of Hawk/Hank Addley) buys a palatial home in the Hollywood area and puts out the call for attractive female boarders. Actresses, models, and sushi chefs begin to fill the home's many spare bedrooms, and it's a bachelor's paradise for a brief while. Unknown to Royce is the fact that the house has a troubled history, the scene of a family massacre and many unexplained deaths. Brunette good girl Victoria (Wintergate's real life wife Kalassu) vows to get to the bottom of all this—and the mysterious killings begin anew. Eyeballs are torn out, bars of soap and pieces of paper float through the air, hands are shoved into grinding garbage disposals, none of it convincing in the slightest. It's all the fault of a no-good blonde, British bimbo, who hides a secret amidst her fading in-and-out accent.

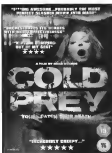
Many no-budget films benefit from the milieu in which they were shot and produced. In watching movies from the prolific Findlays (the *Flesh Trilogy*, *The Lusting Hours*), the viewer is keenly aware of the cashless desperation that hounds the proceedings. The actors in a Findlay movie are desperate, no-name characters forced to drop their clothes for \$50 or less. They pray their friends and relatives never see them acting out written-on-the-spot seamy tableaux for the benefit of Roberto and Mike's whirling camera.

If there's anything that makes *BoardingHouse* (one word title) distinguishable from all the other shot-on-video horror films that came with the home entertainment boom of the early eighties (other than an unheard-of widespread theatrical release), is its sunny, no worries Southern California vibe. This was all intentional, as explained by Wintergate to this writer in an interview I conducted with him that was published in *Ultra Violent* magazine #9. Wintergate and family intentionally pushed the envelope for silly excess, aiming for a campy comedy vibe that was frowned upon by the distributor. Some edits were made, but the light tone remained inescapable. Looking at all the too-happy to disrobe actresses, one knows that all these women probably worked as assistant balloon benders for party clowns who appeared in the film on a lark and a dare. *BoardingHouse* is just one big casual barbecue, and the audience is encouraged to pop a cold one and enjoy the ride.

The stories surrounding *BoardingHouse* are fascinating, addressed in the aforementioned article (go seek it out—Art Etlinger and company are all good guys!), chief among them a theatrical distribution that saw 30 or more prints in circulation screened in the same multiplexes showing *Jaws 3-D* (1983)! Wintergate mentions with great sadness that the countless video copies that flooded check cashing stores throughout the land were all illegal dupes and that the Wintergates never saw a penny for all of their hard work. That's showbiz. One tidbit I found interesting is that Brian Bruderlin, the brother of actor James Brolin (*No Country For Old Men*, *Planet Terror*), has a featured role in the film.

The Code Red DVD contains a laid back commentary with the Wintergates, two TV spots, and trailers for upcoming Code Red titles. *BoardingHouse* is an enjoyable time killer. And like the crazy voice in the trailer insists, "the rent won't kill you . . . But something else will!"

Greg Goodhall



COLD PREY (aka: Fritt Vilt)

Directed by Roar Uthaug

(2006) Metrodome Distribution Ltd UK Region 2 import

Breaking away from the rigours of their daily life in Oslo, five young friends set off north to Jotunheimen, part of the Scandinavian Mountains range and home to some of the highest peaks in Norway, with little more than a snowboarding holiday and a lot of fun on their minds. The group consists of long-term couple Jannicke (Ingrid Bolso Berdal) and Eirik (Tomas Alf Larsen), newly entangled lovers Ingunn (Viktorina Winge) and Mikal (Endre Martin Midstigen), and their single friend Morten Tobias (Rolf Kristian Larsen) who's tagged along for the experience. Once they arrive, intoxicated by the overwhelming vistas before them, there's instantly little else on their minds but boarding down the massive snowy slopes. But like the old saying goes, it's all fun and games until someone loses an eye and Morten sustains a savage compound fracture of the lower leg when he takes a brutal tumble. With their friend in extraordinary pain, it's decided not to trek back to the car but instead locate somewhere nearby that the lad might be able to rest up until help can be raised.

Over a while, rocky incline, they spy what appears to be a hotel as night begins to fall. Once they reach its imposing façade it quickly becomes evident to all that the hotel has been closed for the season, perhaps even decommissioned due to apparent signs of encroaching despair. Eirik breaks into the premises, letting the group in and they manage a makeshift splint, as well as bed in the shape of a couch, for the injured Morten. However, as luck would have it, the small group are not quite as alone and stranded as they initially believe; Eirik, Mikal and Ingunn find the resort's generator and fire it up, whilst later Ingunn seemingly disappears following a misunderstanding with boyfriend Mikal. It's soon discovered that the hotel hasn't had a guest in nearly thirty years, yet it still exhibits the appearance of having been modestly maintained, and remnants found in the cellar hint that someone may be still living within the grounds. The shock revelation of a bloodbath in Ingunn's room immediately alerts the remaining friends that their mysterious squatter is far more hostile than the approaching snowstorm.

Former commercial and music video director Roar Uthaug's *Cold Prey* (2006) is yet another European-lensed horror opus that has somehow managed to sail under the radar and miss the attention of all but the most fervently die-hard of horror enthusiasts. Having drawn positive notice almost globally, as well as holding the accolade of "Norway's first slasher film", *Cold Prey* (a literal translation of the film's Norwegian moniker, *Fritt Vilt*) is a polished, professional and exciting survival-horror entry enlivened greatly by its stunning location photography in Jotunheimen itself. Indeed, apart from a few tiny passages towards the finale as well as virtually imperceptible visual tweaks here and there, the location delivers a grand scale to a small ensemble piece thanks to the fact that it required no digital effects enhancement whatsoever. On the production side, the cast and crew actually camped out at the hotel site during shooting due to the logistics of filming on location, which creates an aesthetic that Uthaug felt could never be achieved had he opted to shoot on soundstages in Oslo. Much like many other snowbound thrillers of recent years, it was that mindset that adds a definitive plus in favour of the production overall.

Though the premise at hand is hardly the most original of ideas, and the identity of the film's hooded killer all but glaringly obvious from the outset, Uthaug generates some decent suspense within the confines of his material and creates some admirable scenes of tension as well as engineers a handful of surprisingly effective scares along the way towards what could be construed as a *Hills Have Eyes* styled (or inverse *Haute Tension*, if one were to compare) climax. Roar's ensemble of (largely debuting) actors and actresses create a plausible sense of believability to their characters, evoking just the right balance of vulnerability, hopelessness and naïve spur-of-the-moment bravado—which invariably sees them commit acts of gross stupidity under the false illusion of last-resort survival heroics. It's a cliché of the genre, but it is to Uthaug's commendation that he milks these fragmentary moments of madness for maximum tension where many of his peers execute similar sequences so ineptly as to leave the audiences uniformly slapping their foreheads in disbelief. Dropping the scenario into a unique location, an isolated and abandoned hotel in the middle of nowhere somewhere along an almost impenetrable mountain range, with protagonists well out of their element and an antagonist who has existed all his life in that element, helps smooth over any clichés or genre trappings that the story inevitably falls into.

And honestly, how many truly effective variations on the "defenceless youths, madman with a deadly weapon" are there left to plunder in the wake of inaugural psycho-killer classics *Halloween* (1978) and *Friday the 13th* (1980) and all the copycat, cash-in, reimagining, reinvention and reboots of the horror film "slasher" sub-genre since their inception? The sub-genre is one that already has an in-built audience, that will arguably watch all and sundry productions within the sub-genre irrespective of quality, budget or vestigial iota of commercial viability; thus it usually takes something a little more polished, professional and above the acceptable norm to make an impact above the sea of direct-to-DVD mediocrity that floods the market every other month for the majority of us. Thereby, although wholly familiar, and somewhat derivative of a genre that has thrived of derivation, Roar Uthaug's feature film debut marks something of an anomaly within its idiom for this viewer. It harbours lush location shooting that brings a solitary uniqueness to its scenery, impressive Cinemascope photography by Daniel Voldheim that adds to the undercurrent thematic of isolation within his measured compositions and striking use of shadow and darkness within the frame, and stark, grungy production design by Astrid Sævi (who utilised the lo-fi technique of varying mixes of molasses and water to create the mouldy, rustic appearance of decay throughout the hotel and its rooms). Essentially, the film gives the appearance of being far more than it actually is which is probably what has set it apart from its peers for many critics.

All of this said though, *Cold Prey* is a decent enough horror outing to give positive recommendation, even if the snowbound thriller concept is starting to become commonplace. After all, prior to its appearance on the international scene, Uthaug's film was preceded by David Slade's comic adaptation *30 Days of Night* (2007), Larry Fessenden's eco-horror *The Last Winter* (2006), Anders Banke's Swedish vampire flick *Frostbite* (2008) and, to a lesser degree, Im Pi-Seong's exemplary Korean drama *Antarctic Journal* (2005) as well as Gregory Jacob's ghost tale *Wind Chill* (2007); which adds up to a awful amount of chilly scares in anyone's books. Central thematic aside, I couldn't help but recall Swedish auteur Mats Helge Olsson's *Blood Tracks* (1985) while watching Roar's film, as the two features mirror each other in many ways, of course, Uthaug's film is less bloody and less a *Hills Have Eyes* clone than Olsson's eighties bombshell. And that far, *Cold Prey* has only been made available in its original language with English subtitles, lending a sliver of arthouse sensibility (read: respectability) against its horror roots. However, minor quibbles aside, Uthaug's debut outing is a fine thriller of its own accord and well worth checking out as an example of how our international compadres are taking well-worn cinematic formulas and adding their own cultural flavor to make them their own.

Michael Thomason

THE THIEF OF BAGDAD

Directed by Ludwig Berger and Michael Powell
(1940) Criterion Collection DVD



No doubt you've heard the expression "Will wonders never cease?" far more often than you care to remember. But here's a film that begs that very question. *The Thief of Bagdad* was first filmed as a silent vehicle for Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.—and that version is a classic in its own right, make no mistake, it would be made again in Italy as a showcase for Steve Reeves which stood out largely due to the innovative visuals provided by none other than Mario Bava. But it was the 1940 Alexander Korda production that set a new standard for exotic cinematic fantasy on every level—from the engaging characters to the handsome production design; from the amazing creatures to the breathtaking use of three-strip Technicolor—here was a true yardstick. And today, following the original DVD release of this title by MGM, the Criterion Collection has at long last given this yardstick its full measure with a generously supplemented two-disc offering. For those unfamiliar with the story, *The Thief of Bagdad* relates the tale of a blind beggar (newcomer John Justin as Ahmad) who was once a king—and his faithful dog, who was once the spritely thief of the title (Sabu, who dropped one letter to play "Abu"). Flashbacks and forward action combine to show how King Ahmad was betrayed and cursed by his evil Grand Vizier, Jaffar (top-billed Conrad Veidt—sommambulist to Dr. Caligan and as commanding an actor as ever pined the trade), who has special plans of his own for the princess of Ahmad's own obsession (June Duprez). Ah, but the story is merely a hook on which to hang non-stop spectacle . . . the magic carpet; the flying mechanical horse; the six-armed doll of death; the giant spider guarding the All-Seeing Eye; and, of course, the unforgettable, bombastic giant genie (or Djinn, if you prefer) played by Rex Ingram. The evil Jaffar, the genie and the nimble thief caused some modern-day viewers to cry foul against Disney's animated *Aladdin*, but the stories sprang fairly from the same source (the legendary tales of Scheherazade) and always overlapped—though it is fair to acknowledge that Disney's interpretation of *Aladdin* owed a lot to Sabu's portrayal of Abu (just watch his introductory scene and say no more). And the fact that special effects technology has evolved over the decades in no way diminishes Korda's amazing 1940 achievements; nor should it trouble viewers today, as the film remains every bit as absorbing and entertaining as it ever was if you don't believe me, take it from Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese, who provide feature commentary on the Criterion release. It should be noted that this is not a conversation—the two were recorded separately, with their observations expertly edited together as the film plays out. Both filmmakers share their constant childhood fascination with the film; with Coppola focusing mainly on the characters and performances (in particular, those of the magnetic Veidt and the impressively childlike Sabu—equally well-known for Korda's *The Jungle Book* and *Elephant Boy*) and Scorsese branching off to filmmaking techniques and directorial style. Scorsese gives the lion's share of credit and attention to Michael Powell (*A Matter of Life and Death*; *The Red Shoes*; one of two credited directors, though even more were actually involved), who remains one of his greatest influences—taking special note of the recurring motif of the image of the human eye (which looked ahead, no doubt, to Powell's controversial, career-killing 1960 classic *Peeping Tom*. Only once does this 'dream commentary' fall short of its potential—when the doddering, toy-fascinated Caliph (Miles Malesson) returns from his magical ride bearing the head of his mechanical horse, it's Scorsese heard on the commentary track . . . wouldn't you want to know what Coppola was thinking at that particular moment? Less nostalgic but far more scholarly is a second commentary track by Criterion's resident historian Bruce Eder, while the sound effects and the choral score of Miklos Rosza have been isolated on a third special track. The original theatrical trailer rounds out Disc One. Disc Two offers a 30m special effects featurette, sharing the contemporary observations of such artists as Dennis Muren (from *Equinox* to Spielberg's *War of the Worlds*), matte master Craig Barron and, of course, the pioneering Ray Harryhausen himself (though *THIEF* did not showcase stop-motion, it still provided plenty of inspiration in its use of blue-screen effects, a Dynamation staple). Vintage audio clips provide the reminiscences of Michael Powell and Miklos Rosza, and a gallery of production stills is at hand. The most extensive supplement is the complete 1939 propaganda feature *The Lion Has Wings* (a wartime salute to the British Air Force which illustrates the perils the country would face were the Nazis allowed to triumph), produced by Korda, co-directed by Powell and including acting bits by June Duprez and Miles Malesson, all directly before their collaboration on *Thief*. Naturally, this rarely-seen supplemental feature has not been restored to Criterion standards itself. But rest assured that *The Thief of Bagdad* most certainly has. Letterboxing is not a concern as regards the standard 1.33:1 image, but the print is bright, clean and dazzlingly colorful. Do not rely on memory. Don't settle for nostalgia. NOW is the time to see it AGAIN.

Shane M. Dullmann

NOBODY LOVES ALICE

Directed by
Roger A. Scheck
(2008)
Indie-Pictures
DVD



Chances are you know someone like Alice (Nitzan Mager). She's the painfully shy office drone, the one who keeps to herself in the employee cafeteria, looking wistfully from afar as her office mates discuss their colorful love lives. When her coworker Abigail (Amanda Taylor) waxes especially poetic about her dynamic fiancé Alex (Phillip Ward), Alice begins to construct a fantasy world about a nonexistent boyfriend. When asked by Abigail to play a deceptive game to see if Alex would cheat on her, Alice seizes the opportunity to make Alex a captive subject to her deepest and most destructive romantic fantasies. Chaining him to a mattress, and taking special pains to make sure he doesn't walk out on her, Alice's lonely apartment becomes a torture chamber and things spiral towards a harrowing conclusion.

Writer/director Roger A. Scheck claims that he was inspired by current Japanese horror films, and Takashi Miike's *Audition* (2001) was probably foremost in his mind, with his shy, damaged heroine who lashes out against the men she believes have wronged her. Scheck gets all the details just right; the slow buildup, the mundane chatter fraught with tension, and most importantly, some of the more gruesome business being kept offscreen and lurking fitfully in the audience's imagination. However, *Nobody Loves Alice* also calls to mind Hong Kong Category III horror pictures, with its claustrophobic, limited settings and realistic squalor. While Scheck doesn't mention it on the on-camera interview included on the DVD, this reviewer would wager that he was also highly influenced by Stephen King's *Misery*, with the most gruesome bit of business in the novel shown from the 1990 film adaptation being presented here in all its queasy glory. *Nobody Loves Alice* wisely saves its most horrifying scenes until the very end, and it's heartening to see an independent horror flick concentrating on story, characterization and narrative in lieu of the usual Herschel Gordon Lewis gore effects.

A brisk, effective shocker, *Nobody Loves Alice* presents many frightening truths about a society full of alienated young women. Encouraged to fit a new standard presented by glossy fashion magazines and TV shows, some women slip over the edge into obsession and madness. Quiet, wan smiles oftentimes hide bubbling jealousy and resentment, and there's little, that we as the vulnerable audience can do but to recognize the potential Alices all around us . . .

Greg Goodsell

REST STOP: DON'T LOOK BACK

(2008) Directed by Shawn Papazian
Raw Feed/Warner Bros. Blu-ray/DVD



Continuing to chronicle the murderous exploits of the first film's canary colored pickup truck killer, *Rest Stop 2* takes place a full year after the 2006 direct-to-video Raw Feed release, coming replete with a trip of young adults attempting to locate the missing persons we've been introduced to. Spunky blonde Jessie Ward is Marilyn Culver, our requisite scream queen/

heroine, while Richard Tillman is hunkish Tom Hitts, brother to Joey Mendicino's Jess from the original. Rounding out the three is slightly nerdy Jared (Graham Norris), whose red-hair and chuckleheadedness make him our honorary Stu Chamo (or Ted, from *Friday the 13th*: Part 2).

Marilyn, Tom, and Jared encounter the psychotic lunatic, peering and searing with hatred from his windshield, but also sniffing on their trail is a pack of Devil's Rejects-esque religious zealots from the first film, who listlessly travel the countryside as a unit in that most family-oriented of vehicles, the Winnebago. It's the latter who are shown to us in the fiery, horrific opening, slaughtering and then being slaughtered in a discordant assortment of snapshot images from 1972—there's Dane Salinger (so memorable as Yvonne from Poe Wee's *Big Adventure*) as the mother, Michael Childers as the father, Gary and Edmund Entin as the twins, and Mike Post as their monstrous, dwarfed prodigy.

Introduced amongst the one-dimensional heroes/heroines on their quest is the notion that the psychotics may be apertures of some sort, and governing over them is the rest-stop owner, played by Steve Railsback as a sort of genial, good-natured folk who experiences occasional outbursts of ferociousness. If this sequel has anything going for it, it's Railsback, who's best known for his chilling portrayal as Charles Manson in the miniseries *Helter Skelter* way back in the '70s. With *Ed Gein* also on his roster of past performances, it's clear that Railsback knows how to inject the right amount of creepiness around the edges for inspired madness, both unrepentant and apologetic alike. (In fact, he's better here than in the uninspired cameo given to him in *The Devil's Rejects*.) Still, as written, he's but a hasty variation on the Cook from *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

As far as DVD extras go, there's an amiable feature-length commentary with director Papazian and screenwriter/producer John Shibani (who helmed the first *Rest Stop*, passing on the duties to Papazian), deleted scenes, a 12-minute making-of that invokes the mythology of the series, and an alternate ending that's more of a coda than anything else.

Aaron Graham

IT!

(1966) Directed by Herbert J. Leder
Warner Bros DVD

On the heels of his gruesome WWII medical thriller *The Frozen Dead*, writer/director Herbert J. Leder exchanged the Nazi theme for a fresh exploration of Semic folklore—specifically, a return to the legend of the Golem (virtually unseen on screen since Paul Wegener's silent classic of 1920).

In this case, the Golem has quite literally become a museum piece—the imposing stone statue is the only thing still standing after a warehouse fire, and it exerts an intimidating fascination over assistant museum curator Arthur Pimm (Roddy McDowall, here officially mis-billed as Roddy MacDowall), not least of all through its casual skull-crushing murder of head curator Harold Grove (who dared to use the Golem's outstretched arms as an umbrella rest) before the opening credits have even rolled!

Pimm soon comes to realize the awesome power that will be his to control if he can get his hands on the sacred parchment which will fully activate the avenging automaton (Alan Sellers)—however, his ambitions never transcend the petty: obtain personal wealth; get rid of the new boss from hell; force the affections of his unrequited crush Ellen (Jill Haworth), who just happens to be the dead curator's daughter. Pimm, you see, had issues well before the arrival of the Golem—he also just happens to be a blatant Norman Bates clone, complete with his own mummified mother!

As this description no doubt conveys, the storyline of *It!* (obviously, not to be confused with the Stephen King favorite, which does not feature an exclamation point in the title) proves nearly as uncontrollable as the indestructible Golem

eventually turns out to be—the *Psycho* rip-off and the Golem remake scream of being two separate projects eventually crushed together. To be sure, both elements provide undeniable highlights. From a dramatic standpoint, the best scene involves the translation of the Golem's dire warning inscription (surprisingly brought to a rabbinical scholar by Pimm), which offers consequences through and including the twenty-first century, while the Golem itself is wisely confined to off-camera motion destruction wherever possible (minimizing the rubber qualities of the otherwise effective monster suit while playing up the subtle menace of the monolith). And from the "no holds barred" perspective? McDowall, unsurprisingly, plays the troubled mania's boy to the hilt, becoming further (and delightfully) unhinged as his new toy becomes less and less cooperative (while remaining literally obedient). The film, naturally, falls apart as it tries to come up with an ending—the "nuclear option" is certainly unique for a Golem film, but by this time Pimm and his plans for the heroine have disintegrated past the point of the star's relevance to the climax of his own vehicle. Ian McCulloch (later a mainstay of such Italian gore-horror as Fulci's *Zombie*) here makes his feature debut as a detective.

Though more a failed experiment than a crucial title, *It!* remains welcome on DVD after all these years, be it for McDowall's histrionics or for the film's sincere and knowledgeable approach to an under-utilized monster of folklore (though neither element truly pays off in the end). Warner's essentially bare-bones DVD (widescreen transfer, trailer, no commentary or other supplements) fills the requirements of this title quite adequately. The Best Buy exclusive disc is paired up with the 1967 thriller *The Shattered Room*.

Shane M. Dallenmann



BLU (RAY) UNDERGROUND!

When the Blu-ray format emerged, I had asked Blue Underground owner Bill Lustig when he was going to make the leap to HD. He wasn't sure, as costs were much higher to produce the new discs. Now that manufacturing is more reasonable, Blue Underground will unleash their first batch of Blu-ray titles from their extensive catalog, and the selection is impressive: *Maniac*, *The Final Countdown*, *Fire and Ice*, *Vigilante*, *Uncle Sam, Dead and Buried*, *Two Evil Eyes*, *Dario Argento's The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*, and *The Stendhal Syndrome* will be the first out of the gate. Expect 7.1 DTS-HD and Dolby True HD sound, and full 1080p picture quality.

BLU-RAY PAY DAY

Get ready to go broke! Just in time for the holiday season, studios are preparing their 4th quarter Blu-ray horror discs. For those who have taken the HD plunge, check out this list of ghoulish goodies. Fox brings *Carrie*, *The Amityville Horror*, *Young Frankenstein*, as well as *The Complete Omen Collection* to high definition for the first time. A new *Planet of the Apes*: 40-Year Evolution Collection box set will contain an unrated version of *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes* and a 200 page coffee table book. Loaded with HD bonus features, it is worth the double dip for those who have bought previous *Apes* collections. With a retail price of \$159.99, you may want to ask your immediate "descendents" to purchase this for you as a gift.



MGM will try to capitalize on the James Bond franchise. Coinciding with Daniel Craig's sophomore Bond film *Quantum of Solace*, a 2-disc Blu-ray Collector's Edition of *Casino Royale* will have even the most ardent fans scratching their heads, thinking do I really need a Blu-ray upgrade? Not so fast, Mr. Bond collector... Even if you decide not to give more chips to the Royale Casino, your 007 dollars (as well your firstborn son) can go to Blu-ray remasters of the Bond franchise. James Bond 3-film collector's packs will set you back \$89.98 for each box set. The first six titles in the series are *Dr. No*, *Die Another Day*, *Live and Let Die*, *For Your Eyes Only*, *From Russia with Love* and *Thunderball*.

WHO NEEDS BLU?

If you're one of thousands of Screen readers who haven't upgraded to Blu-ray yet, I completely understand why. Is there a need to continue to buy special editions of older titles over and over again? In some cases I'd say absolutely. On the pro side, Blu-ray offers improved picture quality, new special features, and True HD sound. The cons are higher prices for films and minimal picture improvement on smaller televisions, and the purchase of a new player will set you back at least \$250.00. As more people buy home theater packages, disc prices will drop, and the format will do well. I applaud any independent company that is taking a chance on Blu-ray.

BLU-RAY CLASSICKS!

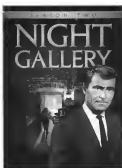
With the addition of *Diary of the Dead* on Blu-ray, the only George Romero title missing in his *Dead* anthology on the format is his first, the public domain *Night of the Living Dead*. Hopefully, Dimension films will port over their recent special edition DVD of the film to BR by the end of 2008.

Look for these horror classics on Blu-ray: *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, the original *Black Christmas*, *Poltergeist*, *Faces of Death*, John Carpenter's *The Thing*, *Land of the Dead*, *Dawn of the Dead* (2004 remake), A Ray Harryhausen box set (containing 20 *Million Miles to Earth*, *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*, *It Came from Beneath the Sea* and *Earth Vs. the Flying Saucers*), *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *Death Proof* and *Planet Terror*.

NEW TO BLU

The Strangers, *The Happening*, *Oris*, Stuart Gordon's thriller *Stuck*, Rob Zombie's *Halloween*, *Hell Ride*, *Hellboy 2: The Golden Army*.





DVD QUICKIES

Brief reviews and DVD news

It's been four years between release dates for Universal Home Video's *Night Gallery* Season 1 and Season 2 box sets. But it's better late than never. The five-disc set contains almost every episode of the 2nd season, with the exception of the rarely seen "Witches Feast" episode and "Satisfaction Guaranteed." Unfortunately, Universal couldn't find these episodes in their vaults. Completists may find this disappointing, but I'd prefer Universal's honesty in this matter—the alternative is no set at all, and that would be a mistake. For the two missing pieces, Universal has more than made up for their absence with a wealth of extras. Guillermo del Toro provides audio commentary on several episodes, and *Night Gallery* historians Scott Skelton and Jim Benson add their commentaries on ten episodes. Rounding out the package are the featurettes "Revisiting the Gallery" and "The Paintings in Rod Serling's *Night Gallery*." The set retails for \$59.98.



Who are The Ghoulgans? Imagine if the animated Groovie Goolies were live action as well. That's the best way I can sum up this horror/comedy troupe, whose DVD program is light fare that will please fans of Universal's monster brigade. The Ghoulgans have several programs on their latest DVD release. If you're curious to learn about the new monsters on the block, check out their ad on page 12.

With rumors swirling around about a *Rocky Horror Picture Show* remake, the timing is good for Richard O'Brien's *Rocky Horror Tribute Show*. Sure, there's no Tim Curry, Susan Sarandon or Barry Bostwick, but O'Brien is the heart and soul of *Rocky Horror*. Original cast members Patricia Quinn, Little Nell and Rayner Bourton are back on board for this reunion of sorts. Recorded in 2005 at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs (where RHPB originally began), the show comes full circle, and hasn't lost one bit of its enthusiasm. Let's do the time warp again... Indeed!

Some things get better with age. This can be said for Tesco Vee, the now 50-year-old dude, who founded *The Meatmen* over 20 years ago. The three-hour-plus retrospective DVD, *The Devil's in the Detail*, is a wonderfully exhausting look at what Tesco has been up to the last few years. Punk rocker, avid toy collector, Satan worshiper, all around fun guy, Tesco is many things, but he'll never be labeled as boring! MVD Video sent this screener our way, along with *Copelution*, a look back at the music videos of Julian Cope and the Teardrop Explodes, *Marc Almond: Live at the Lokerse Freeston 2000*, *Kraftwerk and the Electronic Revolution*, and *Marginal Mystery Tour Memories*, a dull look back at The Beatles bus tour to nowhere, featuring many local blokes who were there at the event, some known in the music industry, and most who are not.

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

Sam Fuller's controversial film *White Dog* (1982) finally comes to DVD from The Criterion Collection. The Paramount Pictures production never received a theatrical release in the U.S. due to its racial subject matter. It's a must-see film, one you won't soon forget. At last—a film you can pair up as a double feature with *Sassassari*. BCI's *Stanley DVD*, is a fun fright flick from director William Greffe (*Death Scene of Tartu*, *The Hooked Generation*). BCI's Exploitation Cinema series continues to impress. Look for these double features—*Mausoleum/Blood Sun*, *Cemetery Girls/Vampire Hookers*, *Satan's Slave/Terror*, *Nightmare in Wax/Blood of Dracula's Castle*, and *Horror High/Lurkers*. Many of these Crown International pictures could be found in Rhino DVD's inferior *Horror* box sets (Volumes 1 & 2). Fans complained that Rhino dropped the ball on these titles, since several films were taken from edited prints. I'll give BCI credit—they listen to what genre purists have to say, and their Exploitation Cinema series are completely uncut. This is especially big news for fans of *Horror High* (a.k.a. *Twisted Brain*), since this will be the first time that the theatrical version is given the home video treatment.

AND FINALLY...

Synapse brings *Patrick* back to life again after he (and the film) lay dormant on the Elite label. Synapse has added a few more extras than the previous disc—if you don't have the Elite disc, by all means revive *Patrick* the second time around. Echelon Films sent our way the indie features *Ferswin's Gate*, *Chronicles of an Exorcism* and *Exit 38*. Severin's *Last House on the Beach* is on DVD for the first time in the U.S. (an expensive Region 2 import was previously available). Anchor Bay offers up Jack Brooks' *Monster Slayer*, *The Vanguard*, *Bryan Loves You*, *Breathing Room*, and *Five Across the Eyes*. Redemption Films has upgraded their previous Image Entertainment titles *Lips of Blood*, *Fascination*, and *Nude for Sale*, while adding new titles *Black Magic Rites*, *The Black Order Cometh*, *Satanic Stunts 2*, *The Black Masses*, and *Killer's Moon*.



DETOURS CAN
BE DEADLY.



UNRATED

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BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL

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